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AND
OTHER STORIES OF
THE STAGE

By

George Henry Payne



With The
Best Wishes of
the author
Geo. W. Payne
Dec 21st - 1908

Payne

A Great Part

A Great Part

and Other Stories
of the Stage

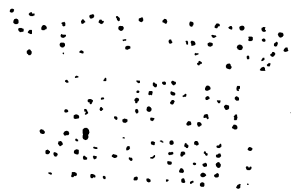
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TO

AUGUSTUS THOMAS

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Contents

A Great Part - - - - 9

Filby's Boy - - - - - 69

Love Letters of an Actor - - 97

A Romance a la Russe - - 117

Peter's Fortune - - - - 135

The Horse that "Starred" - 163

An Eloping Party - - - 195

A Great Part

I.

HE was very tall and straight, a trifle too straight, you might have thought at first glance; but as you examined him more closely and noted the over-brushed condition of his clothing and the lack of adhesiveness in his highly polished boots, you perceived his unnatural carriage was due to injured pride and not to hauteur.

It was near one A. M. and the crowds that had passed up and down Broadway for hours were disappearing. Here and there a name in electric-light letters stood out more prominently as the signs about it dropped from brilliancy into blackness. The overstraight man walked slowly down from Forty-second Street, carelessly, almost defiantly, ignoring the lessening passers by, unless it happened to be a late

supper party of men and women in cab or on foot. These he watched closely, noting the women's rich dresses, the easy laughter and the wine-pitched voices. It was not, however, as an observer, but as a disappointed and curious man who thought how much he might adorn such a group.

He paused after sauntering several blocks and gazed longingly into one of the restaurants, without screens or curtains, where the brilliant napery and many waiters were invitingly exposed to the street front. Then he seemed to remember his pride and moved forward more quickly, more erect than ever. A cigar store with some theatrical pictures attracted him for a moment and he paused again. As he once more started off he seemed to recollect something and with a sigh he drew from his waistcoat pocket several well-worn newspaper clippings. He knew them by heart. He could recite them backwards or forwards but he stood there and read them over again as though to reassure himself that the past

had indeed been real. They were excellent "notices"—his last engagement as leading man, and as he folded them, he drew his lips together in dumb expression of the incomprehensible fate that made him, with such a past, practically a beggar at the present moment.

"Excuse me, but I'd like to talk to you."

Fredericks turned quickly, half resentfully, half amused. But it was not a "*touch*." A little man, half his size, in evening clothes and opera hat, was looking up at him, his eyes partly closed to intensify the gaze and a whimsical smile on his lips.

"You're an actor, ain't you?" said the old man, as Fredericks surveyed him.

"Yes, I am," he replied haughtily. "How did you know?"

"I saw you turned down at the Empire," was the reply, given drily and without any trace of acrimony.

Fredericks winced.

"Your name is Fredericks. You have not succeeded in getting an engagement

and it is now near the first of October." The old man gave this information in a perfunctory way, speaking very rapidly and decisively.

"You started off in August hoping to star or at least get leading business. Three weeks ago you were willing to play the ten, twenty and thirties, and this week you have longed for an opportunity to do something in the cheapest vaudeville house."

Fredericks said not a word. If his amazement was great at this recital from a stranger, his humility was greater.

"Although New York has never heard, does not in fact even know your name, in Nashville, Tennessee, and Waco, Texas, you are considered the greatest yet." The actor started. Could it be possible that this elf-like creature had been peering over his shoulder when he had glanced at his clippings? He stuck his fingers in his waistcoat pocket and clutched them nervously.

Ignoring this action the old man continued:

"The most remarkable facts about you are that you have never been arrested or married—and that you do not get drunk. Without regard to whether you have any merit as an actor, you deserve esteem as a man."

"Might I ask who you are, sir?" Fredericks at last managed to say.

The proprietor of the cigar store had come out and looked at the two men, and observing that one had an opera hat went back satisfied. The after-theater supper parties had ceased to pass and only the gaudily and overdressed women who lounged by paid any attention to Fredericks and his strange companion.

"It does not make any difference who I am," returned the old man, "do you want an engagement?"

"Yes, sir," said Fredericks quickly. Was it possible that this was some philanthropist with a desire to reform the stage! "I have done leading business, first——"

"I know what you have done," interrupted the old man with a smile, "and I know what the Nashville *Banner* said of

your Hamlet and what the Waco, Texas, *Gazette* said of your Othello. The thing is, do you want an engagement that may last a lifetime—at least mine—and that will take you away eternally from Broadway?"

"I do," said the actor slowly and nervously. He was beginning to connect his queer companion, his prosperous air and his wonderful supply of personal knowledge with the Faust legend and the various novels that he had read about riches given in return for a human soul. With a rush of cold perspiration he realized suddenly that somewhere about him he had a soul. Was it in any danger? he wondered.

"I offer you," said the old man, "the greatest part ever written."

"An author!" murmured the actor to himself, and then aloud: "You wrote it?"

The little man chuckled softly. "Not so bad," he said. "Yes, I wrote it, but I'm not the kind of playwright you're thinking of." Then assuming a severe tone and looking sharply at the actor he said:

"Are you willing, Mr. Fredericks, to make all the sacrifices I demand if I promise you great wealth as a result of the work you do for me, are you willing to tear up the past and do exactly as I want you?"

Fredericks nervously clutched the clippings in his pocket, thought of his soul and said dramatically:

"I am willing."

The old man called a cab and said curtly: "Jump in."

Fredericks did as he was bid, the old man gave some instructions to the cabman and climbed in after him. The drive was through a part of the town with which Fredericks had but a slight acquaintance. Jefferson Market he recognized and then the rest was new to him. The cab stopped at one of the few remaining quiet streets of Greenwich and the old man alighted, followed by Fredericks. No sooner had they mounted the stoop than the door was flung open and a liveried butler took their coats and hats.

The ride in the cab had been a silent

one, Fredericks momentarily expecting that he would wake up. He would like to have talked as a preventive of such a calamity but his queer companion awed him into quietude. As he followed his conductor through the brilliantly lighted vestibule and up the heavily carpeted stairs, the atmosphere of refinement and luxury took away any desire to talk; he felt hushed, the natural constraint of a man of refined sensibilities coming in contact for the first time with all that he has regarded as uppermost.

On the second floor was evidently the den and library of the old man. Here there were books, books, books, a bust of Lincoln, Webster, Voltaire and one that Fredericks did not recognize but that others would have told him was Machiavelli, also a statesman of sturdy type. The actor could see that most of the books were of the law type, reports of commissioners, protocols, the Congressional Journal, etc. On the large square table were numbers of documents, foreign papers and piles of letters.

"We will have something to eat presently," said the old man. As he spoke the curtains at the end of the room were drawn aside by the same silent servant who had opened the door. They entered this rear room and sat down at the table on which were numberless dainty cold dishes. The old man ate little and barely sipped the sparkling wine of which Fredericks partook freely, almost greedily. The host made small conversation during the meal, touching only on such subjects as were likely to be agreeable to his guest, thoughtfully aiding Fredericks' digestive apparatus which might otherwise have suffered from the superabundance of work it was suddenly called to do after a long rest. It was not until they had lit cigars, the only part of the repast that the host seemed really to enjoy, that the serious conversation began:

"You say you have nobody in the world with whom you would have to communicate, no relatives who would look you up if you disappeared?"

"Absolutely none."

"And you are willing to give up all your old friends, cease to have any communication with them?"

Fredericks stretched his legs under the broad mahogany, watched the tall, respectful servant fill his glass, drew lingeringly on his Havana and then thought of his old friends. His old friends, forsooth—if mine host only knew what a roystering band of thirty and forty a week barnstormers the phrase brought up! Give them up for this! Fredericks would like to have stood up and danced around the table, but he caught the old man's eye, and raising his glass he made dignified rejoinder as he sipped the wine:

"I am ready to make the sacrifice."

"We will sign the contract to-morrow," said the old man, "to-night we will talk. It will be necessary to adopt some radical measures to conceal your identity. I have therefore given orders that you be found dead to-morrow."

Fredericks bounded out of his seat.

"A body will be found in the river but *you* will be alive," smilingly said the host.

"A residence has been secured for you on —th Street. You will go there tomorrow and live there until after election, when you will take up your permanent residence in Washington. You will be nominated for and elected to Congress as the representative of the —eenth District. I have arranged everything. The convention that nominates you meets next Friday. You will make your first appearance in the 'part' that night, addressing the delegates in a speech of thanks for the unanimous nomination. I have selected this date for your opening as the audience will be small—and with you, and therefore will cover up any flaws coming from your nervousness."

"The critics—" began Fredericks. He already felt that he was playing the part and the actor habits were still on him.

"Have no fear," said the old man, with a smile, "the political critics, unlike the dramatic critics, take much for granted, though their rates are higher."

"Yes," said Fredericks, "I know that."

But the old man evidently did not believe him for he went on.

"You need have no fear hereafter about your notices. After the first month the papers will have too much to do discussing your speeches and policies to pay any attention to you personally. The usual magazine and Sunday specials, however, that will come out of your sudden rise to power, will be edited by me."

"Magazine articles." "Sunday specials." Was he dreaming? Fredericks pondered whether he would have his pictures taken in a frock-coat or a dress-suit.

"The night after the nomination," the old man resumed, "you will address a large mass meeting. At the end of your speech there will be a tremendous demonstration, and a number of enthusiasts, who I know can be trusted, will rush up to the platform and try to carry you about on their shoulders. This you will decline in a few well chosen words that I have here. During your great speech, in order that you gain a reputation for repartee, men in different parts of the hall will in-

terrupt you with derisive questions, the answers to which are here and must be given quickly and promptly. Are you good at picking up cues?"

"Splendid. In Nashville when I was play——"

"This will happen frequently," said the old man, ignoring Fredericks' desire to "reminisce." "It is necessary for a number of reasons. It begets a fear of you. It makes people hesitate before venturing to ask you questions, and then, in case you some time should be thrown on your own responsibilities and make a fool of yourself, your reputation for wit and repartee will cause people to think that you meant something else. Four-fifths of the good things that public men are credited with were originally spoken by vaudeville artists—they are the bright minds of the age."

Fredericks looked wise and nodded. He wasn't quite sure he saw the point.

"As this reputation for wit and repartee is so necessary in the career you are about to enter, trusted men will use influence

with the exchange editors, and interesting details about you will appear in nearly every column of 'size ups.' This same influence will cause them to credit you with such witticisms, bons-mots, political paragraphs, etc., that they have clipped and laid aside, trusting that when the time comes the typography of the paper will identify the source of the clipping. Memory failing, they either throw away their clippings, credit them to an 'exchange' or the wrong paper. Hereafter, you will get all these."

And so the old man went on, talking until nearly the break of day, paying little or no attention to Fredericks, who finally tired of trying to get into the conversation, settled back in his easy-chair, smoking cigar after cigar, sipping the plentiful tonic, and nodding gravely when he thought it was necessary.

The old man discussed with lingering detail all that had been done and would be done to make the "part" a success. It was something he had looked forward to all his life and he was reviewing his

work and plans as much for his own enjoyment as for Fredericks' benefit. Much of the discourse, in fact the most of it, the actor did not comprehend, the biting sarcasm, the old man's broad grasp of all the professions and all kinds of men, his knowledge of their weaknesses and the masterly way in which he had taken advantage of these weaknesses to further his project. That Fredericks did not see did not annoy him, he chuckled at his own jests and made a wry face when the actor, thinking he too ought to laugh, gave a loud stage guffaw.

"Don't laugh too much," he said severely. Fredericks was abashed. "The part is a severe one and it would be better if you never laughed at all. It will make your wit more effective." Fredericks was relieved—he did not see that he was being "let down" easily.

It sufficed evidently from the old man's standpoint, not that the actor should grasp the details, but that he should comprehend the scope, the breadth and the purpose of the project and that he should enter

the new life with the fullest confidence and satisfaction. The inquisitive bent in Fredericks was not encouraged either, but sufficient of the *raison d'être* was given to satisfy his one-night-stand conscience.

Brief as was the account the old man gave, it was to Fredericks an amazing jumble of historical personages, events and measures. Purposely, perhaps, the old man, when he thought that he was being understood too clearly, dropped into Latin or French, with which the actor had only a stage acquaintance. Lincoln, Seward, Chase, Sumner, etc. were names that he heard and recognized; others that to the old man were evidently as great, he did not quite associate with any particular period.

How much of the conversation the host intended that he should understand it would be difficult to say. Fredericks saw, though, that some great personal wrong had been committed, and that the man who had brought to a sudden end a brilliant career, had since risen to fame and fortune and was now Secretary of State.

It was partly to bring about the downfall of this man and partly from a desire to again be an active participant in the government, that led the old man to propose the remarkable project into which Fredericks had entered. His past, his age, his physical disadvantages prevented the old man from doing anything but the thinking. "So many men fail in public life," he said, "because they try to be both actor and author. There is no doubt of the success of what we are about to undertake. It has never been tried in politics before, but the glorious history of the stage proves its feasibility."

"And your name?" said Fredericks, timidly.

"I will always be with you, so that you will never need to call me by any other name than Senator."

It was after five A. M. when Fredericks mounted the stairs with an unsteady step. Drunk, umph! he guessed not. Six hours before he had stood on Broadway penniless, disheartened—the most useless of all creatures, an actor without a stage; i. e.,

a job. And now—the future of the country rested on his shoulders.

The *café au lait*-skinned individual silently and obsequiously helped him undress. Fredericks would like to have spoken to him but the man's flashing eye, his intelligent, handsome face awed him and he was silent. As he sank into the large, soft, canopied bed, the whole room seemed to become animated. The superb cornices bowed, the magnificent mahogany dresser bent obsequiously in two. Was it a dream, the beginning of one, or the end —he wondered.

II.

THE Secretary of State paced the President's room sorely distressed. It seemed as though the opportunity he had longed for all his life was about to pass beyond his grasp.

The gravity of the situation, the effect that an international strife would have on millions of people worried him not at all. War could bring no harm to him, and if brilliantly handled it would make him the next President. It was such a chance as this that he had dreamed of, it was the dread that it might escape him that had led him to change his political faith twice.

And now he feared the President would say no, would declare that the strong stand he had taken in the Ecuador question, and which threatened to lead the

country into war, was not in accordance with his ideas, and that now that he, the President, was fully awake to what it meant, the Secretary of State must prepare to get out of the difficulty in the best way possible.

The President came in slowly, hardly noticing his secretary until he was seated at his desk. "Morning, Branford," he said, letting himself down into his chair. A large, thick-set man, slow of speech and thought, he was physically and mentally the antithesis of the Secretary of State.

"Good-morning, Mr. President," said the Secretary in a deferential tone. He knew that he was the bigger man of the two in the eye of the nation; he knew that in questions of statesmanship he led, and that it was only when the President's obstinacy, or his desire to hold up his reputation for conservatism, dominated him that he did not bend to his will. He was therefore willing, subservient. The President in turn knew that people said that Branford was brilliant, daring, bold, but as these qualities were never obtruded on

him he liked his cabinet minister, and generally let him go ahead and formulate his own policies. Occasionally he would see some move of the Secretary's referred to in print as a *coup d'etat* or Napoleonic, and then he would have the whole thing revoked and "jump on" his cabinet minister, declaring that he wanted nothing but conservatism. Branford stood it, humbly admitted that he was wrong to the President, gave clever excuses to the public, and bided his time.

"How are you feeling this morning?" he asked the Chief Executive, in an interested way.

"Like Hell," replied His Excellency, drawing the tips of his fat fingers softly across his forehead in token of where he was most uncomfortable, and pushing aside the files of Washington, Philadelphia and New York papers he selected a metropolitan daily of the evening before. Here he knew he would find no adverse comment, and he turned over to its conservative editorial page with a slight grunt of satisfaction.

"The Ecuador affair,"—began the Secretary of State.

"What's new about that damned mix up?" said the President.

"Look," said Branford, and he unfolded one of the many morning papers that had been passed by and pointed to some glaring headlines. His Excellency turned reluctantly from the paper of the evening before to one of later date, and frowningly eyed the news offered to him.

"Is it true?" he said finally.

"Dapple cables me that the Emperor William was three hours with the British minister yesterday. A long cipher cable from Hallen—"

"Where's Beecher?"

"In Italy."

"What the Hell is he doing in Italy when we may go to war with England any moment. He's a fine minister."

Branford said nothing. He did not like to explain that this was part of the plan by which he hoped to deceive his opponents. A moment's silence followed and then the President, whose eye had wan-

dered restlessly from the editorial page of the evening paper to the news page of the morning, with satisfaction resting on the one and with anger passing quickly over the other, said:

"I think, Branford, you're all wrong about this Ecuador business." He paused for a moment and then said, as though struck by an idea, "It's nothing but jingoism, that's what it is,—jingoism!"

Branford left the conference with a heavy heart. "He did not believe in war, no matter what the provocation might be; let Eucador look out for itself and get out of the entanglement in the best way possible,"—these were the executive's instructions, and Branford knew that the President's famous "obstinacy" and "conservatism"—he called it by another name between his teeth—had interfered at the moment before his *coup d'état*.

As he came out of the White House grounds and started to walk on to the State Department, the most luxurious landau in all Washington came up the avenue. As Branford surmised, Merton

was in it. There was no man he would rather have seen at that moment,—Merton with his seemingly inexhaustible wealth, his knowledge of men and measures, his sudden rise to power in the House of Representatives, his power, even in the Senate, his clear cut, witty, searching and moving speeches—he was just such a man as Branford had longed to be himself. He had wished to succeed by the means that brought up Merton, but the qualities that made Merton powerful and feared, he had not. Branford had cunning. To it might be ascribed his eminence, for his brilliancy in the lower walks of life and without his position would have attracted no attention.

Branford stopped and the landau drew up to the sidewalk. He accepted Merton's invitation to drive to the Capitol with him. Without giving the details of the conference he conveyed to the young congressman an idea of the differences that confronted him. He had no friends in the cabinet,—inwardly he despised them as a parcel of reformers and farmers,—and

Merton's cleverness at manipulating, as well as talking, made him feel a brotherly confidence in him. Moreover, Merton had supplied him with no little information of a dazzling kind in times past.

The young statesman listened to the cabinet minister gravely while they drove down Pennsylvania Avenue. Branford had almost finished his rather bitter *résumé*, and they were near the Capitol, when Merton called to the coachman and instructed him to turn and drive home.

"I thought you were going to the House," said Branford.

"I was," replied Merton, "but I have changed my mind. I want you to come home with me. Please go on."

The Secretary continued his argument. There was no doubt that Ecuador's case was not as strong as it might be admitted, but why back down? The hard times during the two first years of the administration must be over-shadowed in some way, or at the next Presidential election the administration would be overwhelmingly defeated. Merton sat back listen-

ing gravely to all this, acquiescing now and then by a nod. He had strangely silent moments, this young statesman, moments, and sometimes hours, when he walked and sat among people who talked only that he might be interested; but when the mood was on him he could be as silent and grave as the Sphinx. It was a peculiarity of character that made men marvel, appearing as it did in one so young and eloquent, one famous for his wit and social qualities.

The landau stopped at Merton's splendid residence near Dupont Circle, and the two remained in the carriage until the dusky Hindoo whom all Washington knew as "Mr. Merton's attendant" came out and approached the carriage. Merton addressed him in a language that, linguist though he was, Branford failed to recognize.

"Pardon me," said the Secretary, "but would you mind telling me, Mr. Merton, what language that is?"

"Pali," answered Merton in tones of cold unconcern. Washington had long

ago learned that when Merton answered in monosyllables further discussion was forbidden, and even the Secretary of State, much as he would have liked to pursue the subject, was silent.

The servant returned with an envelope which Merton took.

"Shall I set you down at the State Department," he asked.

"If you please," answered Branford.

They drove several squares in silence and then Merton speaking slowly, and as though he were thinking of something else said:

"The claims of Ecuador to the Plata Islands rest solely on the fact that they belonged to the original kingdom of Quito."

Branford nodded. This was really a summing of the whole question.

"The only evidence of this," Merton went on, "is certain recently found records of tribute and taxes paid by the local ruler to Atahuallpa, the Shyri of Quito, or Ecuador."

"Exactly," murmured the dumfounded Secretary. The Ecuador minister had

given him this information after solemnly pledging him to secrecy. Where had Merton obtained it?

"England and France both claim that the Islands were visited by their explorers in 1520 and 1522, antedating Pizarro, and therefore giving them the right of discovery."

The landau turned down Fourteenth Street and stopped. Looking at the envelope in his hand he said:

"If it can be proven that certain Spanish sailors, deserters from the regular Spanish fleet, crossed the Isthmus, constructed their own boat, sailed down the South American coast, and in company with a Spanish priest landed at the Plata Islands 1505—"

"Great God," exclaimed Branford, almost jumping out of the carriage in his excitement, while the passers by stopped and watched the strange actions of the distinguished pair. "Is this possible?" he added breathlessly.

Merton looked annoyed at the interruption. "Where was I,—O! yes,—if

this can be proven, the claims of England and France have absolutely no ground. Here," and he handed Branford the long envelope, " is an exact copy of the journal of a Spanish priest who sailed along the coast of Ecuador in 1505." He took out his watch.

" I am due at the House in ten minutes."

" You have done your country a great service," exclaimed Branford excitedly, as he stepped out of the carriage.

Merton waved his hand depreciately, " I am glad to be of any service to *you*," he replied simply. And the two men shook hands, the Secretary effusively, the Congressman coldly, and parted.

It was an excited and overwrought House that Merton addressed that afternoon. The statement by the English and French governments that they would not consent to the arbitration of their claims in Ecuador, and the fact that the German Emperor " viewed with alarm " the growing arrogance of the American Republic, was generally known to have given the President several bad hours. It was

rumored that he had "called off" his brilliant Secretary of State, and was in favor of getting out of the difficulty in the best and quickest way possible.

Merton was known to be hand and glove with Branford and, strange as it appeared to many, he was also on terms of intimacy with the French minister. While it was he who privately said the cleverest, wittiest and sharpest things about the President personally, his speeches were always the strongest in defence of the policy of the administration. A few ascribed this to his friendship for Branford, but the majority saw in it only another example of the Quixotic policy that governed him in matters of state.

He spoke slowly at first, denying at the very outset that he knew what policy the administration would formulate in this crisis. What he had to say were purely his personal views. He took up the historical side of the question, and without touching on the startling facts that he had imparted to Branford, gave a vivid survey of the question in the picturesque and

forcible language for which he had become famous. The crowded galleries listened breathlessly and even the members ceased scribbling notes. The House was as still as the grave when he entered upon his summing up,—a stirring, impassioned peroration for the protection of American ideas on American soil.

The reporters in the Press Gallery had written "thunderous and tumultuous applause," long before the demonstration that followed the closing of the speech had begun.

"Mr. Clemens of Indiana," said the Speaker. A small wiry man, with a shrewd face, had arisen when the applause was beginning to die out.

"I have listened to the beautiful, *beautiful* speech of the gentleman from New York, but I think that the members of this body will find more enlightenment in a single sentence if he will answer one question. Does he or does he not believe that we could wage war with three of the greatest European powers over the Plata Islands successfully?"

Merton arose. The house was again silent as a sepulchre. "I do not believe," he said slowly, "that we could wage successfully war with the State of Monaco over a cup of coffee without the assistance of the honorable gentleman from Indiana."

And all Washington repeated the answer that night.

From the Capitol Merton drove to the English Ambassador's. As he entered the rooms there was a distinct movement visible in his direction. People who had not met him before turned towards him, those who had, pressed slightly forward; Merton's eye was rather fascinated by the orderly way in which this assembly, consisting of the most distinguished people in the country, obeyed certain psychological laws, and made it possible for him to pass among them and drop a number of witty sayings (prepared) and avoid the entanglements of a lengthy conversation. He did not care—this man of untried resources—to trust himself to the possibilities of vulgar repartee with some unknown. It was this hauteur, this wonderful re-

serve united with his gentleness and almost childlike qualities (and his wealth) that had first made the feminine contingent of Washington society view him with palpitation.

He passed through the rooms chatting here and there, but entering into no long conversations. Matrons with eagle eyes and fine business instincts had long ago given him up as a man not to be caught by the most winning of daughters, and the daughters themselves, if at all sentimental, sighed in vain. Even men despaired of having him for a friend, for no matter how much they might interest him at the first meeting, he would be remarkably cold and reserved when next they came in contact.

"Hello, Merton," said a tall thin man, with a shaved lip and a full beard. Senator Folsom was one of the few men that never thought the young statesman dignified or reserved, and he was the only man that Merton did not hesitate to talk to. Folsom had come to Washington by reasons of his millions and he had brought

with him a frank, hearty, somewhat uncouth nature, and a large supply of turned down collars that never knew contact with a necktie. Washington society had taught him two things, that tying a cravat is not as tiresome as it appears to be when you get used to it and that Merton, though the biggest *poseur* of them all, was really the simplest man in the capital.

The Senator drew Merton aside and said, "A little game to-night at my house, Patton and D'Urville will be there and a few others, we start at ten, will you join us?"

"Is it for all night," asked Merton, in a much interested way.

"No, we quit at four."

"I am with you," the young man answered with almost undignified alacrity.

This was one of the weaknesses and peculiarities of the marvellous young statesman that all Washington talked of. He would give recklessly extravagent dinners and then complain in an outrageous tone if he lost five dollars at poker. Dip-

lomats, Senators, millionaires of influence would come to these dinners. These men had became accustomed to losing a thousand, two, three, ten in a night; they were poker players of the most artistic sort, "bluffers," cool calculators, model gamblers in every way. Merton, as a brillant and worthy editor remarked, played poker like a member of a 10, 20 and 30 stock company.

"Now will you look at that," he would say to the man next to him, sometimes a Western Senator who spent his salary every night, sometimes an ambassador of a great power. On this occasion, the titled diplomat, who was his guest, raised his eyes slightly and politely smiled his sympathy.

"Just look at it," said Merton, not content with this. "Just look at it. Ace, king, queen, jack, all spades,—and a four of diamonds. Threw away a three of diamonds and got a four. A four? Just look at it! Now, wouldn't that make you mad?"

When he came out of the English Am-

bassador's, the boys were crying the extras on the street. Contrary to expectation, the President had not backed down, a note of almost peremptory character, far plainer than diplomatic notes are ever written, had been sent to England and France demanding that the Ecuador affair be settled by arbitration. Some new source of strength had evidently been discovered. The Secretary of State promised to reveal later in the day what that new found strength was.

Any other man but Merton would have smiled as he caught all this from the headlines. He, however, looked vacantly at the back of his footman, or turned away to make mental memorandum of a new style of trousers worn by an overdressed department clerk.

Merton had hardly gotten within the doors of his residence near Dupont Circle when the attendant to whom he talked "Pali" said in very good English:

"The Senator is waiting for you."

"All right, Joe," answered Merton, and he walked through the drawing-room and

touching a spring, passed into what had once been the drawing-room of the house next to Merton's. This adjoining house was much smaller than his own, and he had to descend several steps to reach the corresponding floor. Drawing-room it had been once, but now it was a library, overstocked with books and papers.

A little old man was pacing up and down, laughing gleefully.

"Well, Fred," he said, as Merton came in, "we've got 'em."

The young statesman yawned wearily. His entire character seemed to have changed when he passed the secret door. From the cold dignified statesman he became a man of ordinary mien and more ordinary habits and language.

"O, Gee!" he said, as he threw himself into a chair and stretched his arms above his head in ungraceful gesture. "I'm dead tired."

"I can't find fault with you," said the old man eyeing him approvingly. "You've had a hard day's work."

"I should say so," complacently remarked Merton.

"You did the speech beautifully," the old man chuckled. "I didn't think old Clemens would bite as easily as he did. We ought to give him a medal. He has never disappointed me once."

Merton listened to this with the air of a man not much interested, pulling at his beard as though it were a watch chain.

"To-night,—" began the old man.

"I'm going to play poker at Senator Folsom's," said Merton resolutely.

"That's all right," said the Senator kindly, "you deserve some recreation. But for Heaven's sake, Fred, don't kick about your losses."

"It seems so unnatural to lose," was the rueful reply.

"Did you ever win—in the old days," there was a humorous gleam in the questioner's eye.

"No," slowly, "but then—"

"Well, people talk a lot about your way of playing poker. Lose this to-night,"

and he handed him a roll of new bills, "and lose it gracefully."

Merton stuck the bills in his pocket. "See you in the morning," he said and arose.

"Merton," the old man had dropped his easy, laughing manner, and standing in the center of the room, was speaking in a tone of mock surprise, "why is it that a man of your enormous wealth complains about a small loss at poker?"

Instantly Merton's face assumed the cold, dignified air that belonged to the the other side of the secret door. "My dear fellow," he said slowly, looking over the old man's head, "poker is the only game in the world at which I lose, and my losses annoy me because the value is so small compared to the pleasure they give me."

"Good," said the old man, relaxing once more into a mien of contented good nature. "You never can tell when some fellow is going to spring that on you.

Merton too, had dropped his statesmanlike manner, after the delivery of his

reply. "See you in the morning," he said again, and he mounted the steps and passed through the secret door.

The morning papers recorded the ultimatum, for such it was, to the foreign powers; they gave the Secretary of State's reasons (Merton's document), and they recorded the most disastrous panic that Wall Street had known in a decade. Had the ultimatum been held until after the Exchange closed, Wall Street could have thought it over, and had its wits about it when the morning came. But no! by some stupid blunder, the startling news was given to the press at one P. M., leaving two hours for riot and ruin to have its way.

To this disaster, as in fact to the leading political news, Merton paid no attention. The sporting page and the theatrical column were the only parts of the paper that interested him. He had finished reading the papers and was lolling back enjoying his after breakfast cigar when a

card was handed to him. The Secretary of State was below, exceedingly anxious to see him. Merton stepped to the secret door that led to the adjoining house. He closed it after him, and hastened downstairs to the library. The old man was reading; he did not even raise his head when Merton came in.

"Branford's here and wants to see me."

"Yes?" said the old man.

"What does he want to see me about?" asked the young man in a matter of fact way.

The Senator toyed with several telegrams that lay on his desk. A copy of the news bulletin that in every city in the country was being posted and attracting excited crowds was also on his desk, and looking steadily at this he said:

"Branford wants you to get him out of a hole. The French minister has replied to yesterday's ultimatum, and Branford's explanation, with the further information that the Spanish deserters who visited the Plata Islands in 1505 were in reality French sailors who had sailed in a Spanish

ship from love of adventure; that they deserted because they were Frenchmen and visited the Plata Islands as Frenchmen, and that, therefore, Ecuador's claim that this was originally Spanish territory, falls to the ground."

"Well?" said Merton, vacantly.

"As you supplied him with the information that led to the ultimatum and have been the cause of the declaration of war, he naturally turns to you for help in this crisis." The Senator smiled in a way that showed he was completely satisfied with the condition of things that had been brought about.

"You will tell Branford, and then several hundred people that call on you to-day that you have absolutely nothing to say now, but that you will address the House to-night, and then you will endeavor to present some solution of the difficulties that involve the nation. Your conversation with Branford will be something like this," and he handed Merton a long slip of paper on which was written some dialogue.

Merton took and glanced over it and

then sat down and went over it carefully and thoughtfully. He had hardly laid the paper down when the old man, standing in the center of the room, said in a voice that in inflection and accent resembled Branford's:

"Mr. Merton, you doubtless know that France has made a very startling reply to my note of yesterday?"

"Yes," said Merton wearily.

"I do," corrected the old man.

"I do," repeated Merton.

"I was indebted to you for certain very valuable information, and I am led to believe that you might be able to help the administration in this crisis."

"What I have to say, Mr. Branford, and what I can do, will be made evident in my address to the House this evening."

"Mr. Merton, to a certain extent I hold you responsible for the predicament—"

"Mr. Branford," repeated Merton mechanically, "I would not advise you to say any more."

There was a moment's silence, and then

the old man chuckled and said, "I guess that will settle him."

Merton arose and started up the stairs.

"Don't go to the House this afternoon, keep as quiet as possible and speak to as few people as you can," the old man added.

The country was at fever heat. The night session would tell the tale whether we would be at war with three great European powers, or whether we would shamefacedly retreat from the policy that for two months the administration had been pursuing. It all depended on Merton,—the remarkable power that he had over both the administration and Congress showed no signs of weakening as the day wore on. It was said that while he had not committed himself to war, he could not very well get out of it without bringing about his own disgrace and downfall.

"What is his next step?" wrote one impartial editor in his afternoon leader, "This wonderful young man who seems

to dominate the entire legislative and executive, this strange combination of Daniel Webster, Disraeli and Gladstone, who has come up so suddenly. Will he be able to get us out of the difficult posítion into which he has led us? Will he, we ask? The country anxiously awaits his answer."

After the panic of Tuesday, Wall Street went listlessly about its business, awaiting the next move. The wires from and to Washington were glutted with messages, newspapers talked of but one thing,—even the day office boys willingly stayed beyond their hours and dropped the pie they were about to devour when a fresh dispatch came in.

Through all this Merton was calm and indifferent. He saw the reporters who crowded the street near his house and smilingly informed them that he would address Congress at 10:30 P. M., and that then they would know his policy. The President's special messenger got the same answer, and the members of the Cabinet, who were waiting the messenger's return, hoping against hope, turned disconsolately

away from their Chief when he read Merton's reply.

"There is nothing to do, gentlemen," said the President sadly, "but to adjourn this meeting until ten o'clock. I will have an operator here, and the proceedings of the House will be reported to us as they take place." And the Cabinet Ministers silently departed to break social and diplomatic engagements and await the eventful hour.

Merton dressed carefully, and then went down to dinner. Somehow or another, dinner was not up to the mark, and he ordered an extra bottle of wine. As he smoked and drank, he stretched his legs under the table and thought of Broadway at midnight, the electric-light signs, the good-natured chaff with fellow actors over a couple of glasses of beer,—and he felt lonely. He arose, walked back to his study lazily, locked the door, touched the spring and went down, a sneer on his lips.

The Senator was lying on the lounge, his knees within several inches of his head, rolling from side to side like a ball. He

disentangled himself as Merton came in and stretching his little body out the full length of the lounge, said gleefully:

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"I was not hired to think," growled Merton. He was thinking of Broadway, etc.

"Humph! you're getting damned original." And drew himself up into a ball again.

"What are you going to do now that you've got us into this pickle?"

"Us,—who's us?" sneered the Senator.

"Me and the country."

"Me and the country," repeated the Senator, and he laughed.

"Yes, me and—or rather I—and the country, if that suits you better. Don't you think I'm to be thought of?"

"O! Yes. I haven't done anything else but think of you, have I?"

There was a menacing light in the old man's eyes. It was the first time that Merton had shown any sign of insubordination.

"I'm tired of it all," said Merton, and

he threw himself into an armchair, and drew the decanter toward him. His fear and reverence were passing away,—a badly cooked dinner had awaked within him memories of the delightful days of old.

The Senator eyed him for a moment through partly closed eyes, and then said slowly, letting each word sink in:

"What do you think would happen to you if the people should learn of the way you had deceived them?"

Merton turned pale. He had never thought how far reaching had been his deception; the consequences of exposure to himself had not entered his mind. Now it seemed to come with panoramic clearness. The fury, the outcries, the thundering denunciation and abuse of the press, the hatred of those who had been ruined by the great panic, and, perhaps, their revenge. He wiped the perspiration from his brow, while the senator watched him narrowly.

"You'll find to-night's speech on the table there," said the old man drily. After a moment's silence, "It's not very long,—

it's a sort of compromise, but it will drive Branford out of the cabinet, I think. If it doesn't, we've had our trouble for nothing and must begin all over again."

"I don't think that I would care—" began Fredericks.

"As you brilliantly remarked on entering the room," said the old man, with a cold gleam in his eye, "you were not hired to think."

And he picked up a book and began reading, which was a sign that the interview was at an end.

Merton took up the speech and left the room. As he did so the old man shouted after him:

"Very calmly and a trifle cynical, I shall be there."

Merton smiled disdainfully at these instructions as he passed into his own room. He was blue,—disgusted, and for the first time since he had been acting this part he was filled with fear. He had always known that the old man watched his speeches or at least had somebody else watch him in the galleries, but the threat-

ening tone in which the old man said "I shall be there" made him feel that something climactical was about to happen. What part did he really have in all this,—the praise was not given to him, it was all for the speeches, "The masterful erudition, the wonderful insight, foreign policies, etc.," but *for him* personally not a word. Nothing about his appearance, his grace, his delivery, his conception of the part—bah! Force of habit (atavism) caused him to reach into his waistcoat pocket, but they were not there, and going to his desk he took out several soiled clippings. Here were notices that *were* notices,—"Mr. Fredericks is probably the handsomest man that has appeared on the Nashville stage," etc. No danger of being found out here (Merton as he had been called for two years, trembled), unless by chance you happened to stray on to Broadway, and invite the attention of the New York critics. But, alas, all that was over, and the statesman-actor paced up and down, memorizing his speech, stopping now and again to shudder.

At ten o'clock he was told that the carriage was waiting to take him to the House. For the first time in his life he felt that his "lines" might have an effect on more people than those within the immediate sound of his voice. For months, of course, he had known that what he said was copied far and wide, telegraphed and cabled, but he had never felt anything but the actor-pleasure of speaking to an audience. Now for the first time he realized how great were the weapons that he had been using, now he felt for the first time in his life and probably for the second time in the history of the world, an actor-reverence for the writings of the author. What a mere instrument he was, —and worse, an instrument that at any moment might be called in to bear the blame for all the mistakes that the forces to which he was subservient had been guilty of.

There was a ripple of comment when Merton entered the House. But the members on the floor eyed him coldly. They resented his absence from the after-

noon session, and his coming late savored of the theatrical. However friendly they had been to him before, they now felt that something more than brilliancy and "attractiveness" must be shown by him who had been the leader in this Ecuador business. Merton could feel the antipathetic sentiment; in the language of his mind the "house was cold," "he was up against it," "they were dead ones," etc. etc. It is a terrible sensation to even the man who announces to a one-night-stand audience that "my Lord, the carriage waits." What then was it to a man about to deal with an international crisis?

The dreary member from Texas completed his speech at 10:27. A few friends applauded, and then there was an excited buzz, both on the floor and in the galleries. Merton stood up. He gazed up at the galleries and there he beheld something that took away his breath. Sitting surrounded by a number of friends while all the other galleries looked on in amazement at this unusual presence was Branford, the Secretary of State, he whose

future depended upon the outcome of to-night's proceedings and who had come to the House to see what relief Merton had to offer to him. Back of him, cowering low, his face more than half concealed by a great coat, was the Senator glaring at Branford, watching his every movement, a sinister smile on his lips.

"Great God," Merton said to himself hoarsely.

He had no notes or manuscript,—that had been part of his strength as a speaker, He wished now that he had availed himself of the privileges of the other act—members.

"Mr. Speaker," he said slowly, tremulously—

There was a long distinct hiss from the members' gallery. Never since the day that he had faced an indecently behaved hundred-and-fifty-dollar house in Texarkana had he heard that sound. He turned quickly and resentfully toward the gallery. There was a scuffle and then a buzz—

"Mr. Speaker"—

There was a murmur of disapprobation

throughout the House. Was it for him, —or for the man who hissed?

"Mr. Speaker," the House tittered. Merton turned pale and his knees trembled. It was the first time a respectful audience had not been granted him. Quickly and vividly there came before him the pictures of his many easy triumphs, but now for the first time he realized that the curiosity that had caused him to be listened to with eagerness was absent. He felt that there was some new strange emotion working among the people that he was about to address. It went through him like a sharp pain that in the address that he had memorized and that he was about to speak there was something that would not jibe with this emotion of the House and the galleries; there was a deep biting sarcasm that must be as gall to them.

"Mr.—Spea—ker," he said, slowly, as all this passed through his mind in a few seconds, and then coming back to his subject, he suddenly realized that the speech itself had gone out of his mind.

"Mr. Speaker."

The House had ceased to titter. The people in the galleries were beginning to look into each other's faces, what could it mean? What had happened to the ever ready Merton?

Merton looked wildly about him.

"Oh! God!" he said to himself, "for somebody to give me a cue." He looked up at the galleries, where the Senator's grim Mephistophelian face was plainly to be seen above all others. At Merton's strange action a murmur came from House and galleries, and then almost speaking to the Senator who was hundreds of feet away from him, he murmured,

"My God! I have forgotten my lines."

It was a hoarse whisper, but every man and woman in the deathly still house heard it. There was silence and then a roar of laughter, laughter led by the opposition in derision and echoed by the galleries in perplexity.

"Mr. Speaker." it was Clemens of Indiana who was on his feet, speaking with biting sarcasm, and the distinctness of a funeral chime, "I desire to call the atten-

tion of the House to the fact that the gentleman from New York refers to his speech as "lines," showing that he, like the Secretary of State, and all the ranting jingoes, has in this matter simply acted a part," and then vindictively, "and badly acted it at that."

Dazed and stupefied, Merton turned with blazing eyes on the man he had crushed a hundred times.

An actor?—an actor?—For three years Merton had hardly spoken in a public place what he thought. All the conserved wrath of those years burst forth in this first real personal altercation. He tried to think of something to say, but the habit of original speech had gone from him. He threw his hands above his head, and, glaring at Clemens, yelled, his voice broken with rage:

"What if I am an actor, ain't I a good one?" And then leaping toward his adversary he drew from his pocket several soiled newspaper clippings and threw them on his desk.

The House from its fit of laughter had

seemingly become mad. There was a roar of amazement, derision and then indignation ; it lessened and then increased in volume, as the galleries and floor grasped the full significance of what had transpired. It went from amusement and laughter to fury and madness.

Down the aisle and out into the lobby rushed a trembling, frantic figure. Several men had come from the galleries and were waiting for him. In a second he was being bodily and swiftly carried into a carriage that stood at the Senate entrance.

As the carriage door closed, the Senator spoke to the dark-skinned man who sat beside the limp and partly unconscious Merton.

" Shave his beard off as soon as you get into the stateroom. I'm not sure whether the American liner or the Cunarder goes first. Be sure, however, to get a deck cabin, and don't let him out."

" Which depot? asked the driver, " Peeay or the B. & O. ! "

" B. & O.," was the reply. ' ' He deserve sit."

As the driver whipped up his horses, Merton pulled himself together and, showing that he had not been entirely oblivious of what had passed, stuck his head out and called faintly to the Senator,

"Send me those clippings from the Nashville Banner and the Waco Gazette, will you, please?"

A London paper the other day recorded the first English appearance of Clarence Fredericks the well known American actor, who, after several years traveling on the Continent, had again taken up his professional labors. "We understand this young American has come into a fortune." said the Saturday Review, "his sumptuous and gorgeous production of Hamlet looks like it. It is difficult, however, to reconcile so lavish an output of money with so inadequate a display of talent."

Filby's Boy

Filby's Boy

IN Lansing, Michigan, is probably the worst "best hotel" in the country. A Christmas breakfast eight hundred miles from Broadway is bad enough—but in Lansing, Michigan—"words fail."

But the morning was mild and spring-like, and the warm sun shining into the dining-room rather tended to disperse the gloominess of the five members of the company who gathered at the late breakfast table. Haswell's unfailing good spirits were contagious, and we were all soon in full enjoyment of the stale jokes, scuttled eggs and soggy beefsteak.

"Baa-a-a," bleated Haswell, and Stearns passed him the milk. "I'm not feeling very well," said the Chief, when the waitress came to take his order; and then, making a wry face, and putting his hand

on his stomach as though in great pain, he said, "Bring me some fried ham, boiled eggs, broiled steak, lamb chops, liver and bacon, hot muffins, milk toast, fruit cakes, and a *little* oatmeal," etc., etc.

The hotel proprietor came up just then and said to the Guv'nor: "I see, Mr. Stevens, that one of your former actors has passed away."

"Passed away," snickered Haswell, "well, that's all right, as long as he hasn't died."

"But he is dead," said the stolid proprietor.

"Dead and passed away—versatile man," began Haswell.

"'Walter Jordan,' here it is in the paper," and he offered us a copy of the local gazette.

"Why, Jordan, your first dresser!" exclaimed Stearns, addressing the Guv'nor.

"And a suicide," said the Chief slowly. He had taken the paper, and was reading it. "Found dead in the river"; he passed the paper around; each read it and was silent. Haswell presently rose from

his unfinished breakfast, and quietly left the room. A cloud passed over the sun, and the room became dark and dreary. One by one we left the table. There was nothing to say. Christmas on the road is seldom a merry day, and never in Lansing, Michigan, and then when—

Did you ever think how fond you can become of a person whom you have used as a butt for your humor?

As Stearns says, "The theater is a funny business," by which he means that acting as a profession has its difficult and trying side.

* * * *

Before we had been three nights on the road it was generally agreed that "Filby's boy" was the limit. He only had one line to say, and that line he made remarkably funny, though the author had never intended it should be viewed in any other than in the most serious way. "Here's your coat, sir, from Mr. Filby," was not, as far as the ordinary actor could see, a particularly bright line, but Jordan, with his swinging arms, his dancing, uneasy

step, his head at an angle, and his voice in a high key, got a laugh where the author's most polished wit and Stearns' finished action failed.

Jordan had been bell boy in a hotel, office boy in a law office, errand boy in a shoe store, printer's devil, hired hand on a farm, doctor's boy, in fact there was hardly a juvenile vocation at which he had not tried his hand. Before he "joined the stage," as he called his admittance into the sacred precincts of art, he was assistant coffee drawer in a quick lunch place on Park Row.

"The salary was good," he said, "but I had to carry the things that you put the coffee in—urns? yes; thank you—and as I am not very strong, I had to give up the job."

So it happened that he was at leisure when the company was forming, and a "dresser" was needed for the star; Jordan's mother knew the lady who did extra laundering for the star's wife, and in this way he became "one of us."

He called it, as I have said, "joining

the stage." His first conception of his duties was evidently as militant as his phraseology, for he took a present-arms attitude when brought before Daniels, the manager, and when asked to sign the contract, raised his right hand as though to take an oath of allegiance. The contract looked very formidable, I admit, and he probably recalled something that he had seen in a notary public's office.

"Don't swear," said Daniels, handing him the pen, after gazing a moment at the outturned palm.

"It's against the rules of the Company," snickered Finn, the advance man.

Jordan turned red, and looked very much embarrassed. "Oh, excuse me," he said, in a low voice, nervously, "I didn't know."

Poor Jordan, anybody could see that he must have been at least twenty-three, but he was born to be a boy all his life; and his physical infirmities, united with his mental defects, made him rather an object of contempt.

He began by getting into trouble the

very first day that he did anything. Although his principal duties were to dress the star, pack his trunk, carry his valise, it was found that he could be used in the last act as a "tailor's boy." When Daniels told him this, he turned pale and then red, took off his large, triple plate glasses, and said in an amazed, delighted way, "Do I really come on and say something, Mr. Daniels?"

"What do you suppose you come on for?" shouted Daniels. "To show your beauty?"

"Oh, excuse me," he said, in the frightened way he had of showing respect.

He came to the rehearsal, and the author, who was directing the play, gave him the manuscript to mind while awaiting the arrival of the star. In the meantime Daniels called to him from the darkened parquet to go back up to the office and get certain pictures. The office was a mile away from the theater where we were rehearsing, and he walked it both ways, carrying the manuscript with him, and holding the company for more than

an hour, while the property man hunted him up. Even then he insisted on bringing back the manuscript himself and turning it over to Mr. Williams.

"Well, you're the biggest fool I've seen yet! Why the devil did you carry that away?"

"Mr. Williams told me to mind it."

"Oh, did he?" said Daniels, sarcastically, and everybody laughed.

"What have you done before this?" said the manager, after eyeing him a moment. He was beginning to wonder just exactly what sort of a proposition he had on his hands.

"I was in a lawyer's office, and in a doctor's office, and then I worked as bell-boy in a hotel."

"Why did you give up being bell-boy?"

Two or three of the actors, including Gordon, the other "boy," who acted as dresser to the leading man, were standing near, and, egged on by their laughter, Daniels really imagined his questions were very witty.

"The hotel burned down," replied Jordan.

"Oh," said Daniels, "and why did you leave the doctor's office?"

"He died."

"Oh," said Daniels, not quite so flippantly, "and why—he hesitated about continuing—"and why did you leave the lawyer's office?"

"He was arrested," said Jordon, in a matter of fact way.

"Great God!" shouted Daniels.

"Great Heavens!" exclaimed Smith, leading heavy.

"Holy Gee," muttered Gordon.

"Have you your contract with you?" asked Daniels, after a minute's pause, during which there was no laughter. I wondered if he meant to grab it.

"No, sir, my mother took it."

"Oh, indeed!" muttered Daniels, and then aloud, "Well, don't you Jonah this show!"

"No, sir," said Jordan, as the manager walked away.

That was the first of his "mistakes," as

the Guv'nor good-naturedly called them, for he alone of all the company saw the sad side of the boy's character.

Jordan was strenuously ambitious, sincere and honest, and uncompromisingly in earnest, and I am sure that if the hotel-doctor-lawyer jobs had not burned down, died, or been arrested, and his employers had been at all patient, he would have attained distinction in any one of those professions; but he was now among a class of people who are temperamently the most impatient in the world, who live at concert pitch, and who, though good-hearted and generous to a fault, are, as a rule, thoughtless.

From that day on Jordan was a "mark," and though the "jokes" played on him led him to make some very serious mistakes, the Guv'nor viewed them leniently, and as he was master, "Filby's boy" held his position.

"Filby's boy," as a name, did not come to him immediately, but only after he had earned it. The story of his three previous jobs quickly went the rounds, and during

the three weeks we were rehearsing, he was intermittently called "Front," "Doc," "Judge" and "Draw One." When we got down to rehearsing the last act, the boy was so nervous that I almost feared he would collapse. He would take off his large goggles—they were nearly an inch thick—rub his eyes ferociously, and then turn anxiously to Hallen, the stage manager, who was in the first entrance with him, and who was to tell him when his cue came. The one line that he had to say he kept repeating to himself: "Here's your coat, sir, from Mr. Filby. Here's your coat, sir, from Mr. Filby. Here's your—"

"Now, Jordan, go ahead," said Hallen, who had been watching the stage.

Jordan stood stock still; he couldn't say a word. He opened his lips several times, but his tongue refused to act, and as the stage wait grew, and attention became fastened on him, he swayed from side to side, as though drunk. The members of the company tittered (at a rehearsal it was not such a serious matter), but

the Guv'nor, to whom he was to address the remark, and who was waiting for him in the centre of the stage, nodded to him kindly, and said, "Come along, Jordan."

That broke the spell, and he rushed forward, and stammered his line. After a few rehearsals he learned to speak it fairly distinctly, and walk erect and keep his head up.

From that time on he was known as "Filby's boy." We were to have two weeks of trying it on the dog,—through New York and the New England States. We opened in Albany on Thanksgiving Day. By this time Jordan's popularity in the company was quite remarkable; there wasn't a member who hadn't some story to tell about him. Gordon who had been a circus acrobat, and who was making his first appearance in the "legitimate," speaking a few lines, playing a violin, and dressing, especially found him "easy." He told Jordan that it would improve his appearance on the stage if he would learn to turn somersaults, and volunteered to teach him how. The experiment was

tried the next day at Troy, after the ground cloth had been laid. Poor Jordan was sore for a week. Gordon was delegated to show Jordan how to "make up." At Albany, it being the first night, and too serious an event, he looked all right, but the second night in Troy, he came on with his cheeks heavily rouged, making the upper part of his face look like a soubrette's, while around his mouth were a lot of black lines, indicative of old age.

Daniels disliked him so much that he took no pains to conceal it, and the boy turned to me for suggestion and advi ce

"Did I do any better, sir?" he would ask after each performance, and it would have been a cold-blooded individual indeed who would not have said "yes."

He made a splendid dresser as theater valets go, but his whole soul was wrapped up in the small part he took in the third act.

After several days on the road, he lost his nervous fear of everybody connected with the company, and remarked to me

that he thought Mr. Haswell, the leading juvenile, "a fine actor."

"He's the most graceful man on the American stage," I answered.

"That is my principal fault, isn't it, sir?"

"Your principal fault?"

"Yes, sir; I am so awkward, I don't know how to use my hands."

"Yes," I said. I couldn't help but rather admire his courage.

"I was thinking of asking Mr. Haswell to give me some points," he said nervously, as though the idea were extremely audacious.

"It isn't a bad idea," and here the conversation ended.

That was the beginning of the boy's real trouble.

He went to Haswell and asked for "points." Had the earnestness and the honesty of the boy been understood, things might have ended differently, for he had character that was moldable, but earnestness and sincerity are not qualities that the theater develops—insincerity is

the predominating fault of people who are associated with the stage for any length of time. Without even having said an insincere thing, a man may be absolutely without sincerity as a moral quality, and that is the great fault of the actor as a man. Jordan was out of his element by every law of his being.

What Haswell's emotions were when Jordan put the question to him, I don't know. He told him that he really wasn't as graceful as people said he was, and that the really graceful man in the company was Stearns.

"Now, watch Stearns," said Haswell, "watch him on the stage, but especially watch him off. Follow him; don't leave him; watch how he puts on his coat, and takes off his hat. Get as close to him as you can, and imitate his walk. That's the way to be graceful."

Jordan accepted all this, but ventured to remark that he, Haswell, had the better part of the two.

"Not at all," said the actor; "my part

is a baby's part; anybody could play it; you could play it."

"Do you think so, Mr. Haswell?" eagerly.

"Most decidedly," said Haswell, very seriously. "All you need are a few rehearsals; but watch Stearns; don't leave him."

The poor dazzled boy had never heard it said that many men of great reputation are better actors off the stage than they are on. Acting on the stage he could understand; that people acted off, he failed to grasp.

The consequences of this advice were most distressing—especially to Stearns.

When the company assembled the following morning to go to Syracuse, the next stand, Jordan, as soon as he reached the depot, put his grips in a corner, and went up to Stearns and stood about six inches behind him. Walter had not noticed this movement, and suddenly started to walk up and down the platform. Jordan was after him, not six inches behind, lifting his legs in the same fashion

that Stearns did, and throwing his shoulders back in imitation of the sturdy figure of the actor. It was lock-step for about half the length of the depot, when Stearns turned about and said angrily:

"What the blazes are you dogging me for?"

"Nothing; excuse me," he said, abashed, and dropped back a couple of feet; but as soon as Stearns had apparently forgotten him, he was after him again, raising his hat when the actor did, and stretching his neck abnormally to catch the movement of his arm when he shook hands with Haswell.

"Don't you think it a little unfair," said the Guv'nor to Haswell and several of the other actors, who were watching Jordan's antics with evident enjoyment. "It would be all very well if he were capable of coping with you, but he's so absolutely defenseless against your jokes —I think it's unfair."

It was a mild protest. It might have ended the matter there, if it were not for

the ennui that is part of the actor's life when doing one-night stands. Anything that amuses is valuable, and Jordan amused.

Stearns finally tired of having him around, at his elbow when he turned, at his heels when he walked, and face to face when he came out of his dressing room. He told him flatly to "get out and stop it, or harm would come to him."

He went, of course, immediately to Haswell, and told him that Stearns had put a peremptory stop to his studies in grace.

"That's all right," said the actor, "you have improved greatly, and to-morrow I'll begin rehearsing you in my part. I am not feeling very well, and may want you to take my place any night."

To understand how ludicrous this statement was, Haswell's part had been declared by a number of critics the showiest ever written. He had half a dozen changes of costume, impersonated four or five characters, and in addition to having a practical monopoly of the light comedy,

had two strong, rather melodramatic scenes in the first and second acts.

He gave Jordan the manuscript of his part, and the boy could with difficulty conceal the excitement he was laboring under. Gordon bumped into him on the street that afternoon, the manuscript in his hand. Stearns saw him going up in the hotel elevator, still studying the lines; and Hallen, the stage manager, had to call him twice to come out of the dressing room and join in the shouting of the mob in the first act. I hadn't suspected that it was in him, but he was a trifle arrogant that night.

Was he to be blamed? He had never seen an actor off the stage; he was suddenly pitched into a camp of them; he didn't understand their humor, or their point of view. Heretofore, buffeted about by people of no very great account, he was now among (from his point of view) the most interesting class of people in the world, and if Haswell was to be believed, he would soon be an important one of them. He was careless in dressing the

Guv'nor that night, handing him the wrong apparel, mislaying the articles of "make up," mixing wigs, etc., and the Guv'nor, who never spoke sharply to anyone, reprimanded him.

"Oh, excuse me," he said. It sounded a trifle hard though; it didn't have the nervous, whole-souled, frightened sound that formerly showed how sincere his regret was.

The Guv'nor was the only one who did not know the cause of the suppressed laughter when we met at the theater in Springfield, to rehearse one of the changes the author had made in the last act. The company had been called for 11, but nearly every one was there at 10.30—an unusual and suspicious thing. Then Haswell stepped up and said to Jordan, who had been watching him eagerly, nervously, "We have a half hour to spare, and we might as well begin, Mr. Jordan," bowing to him with mock deference.

"Yes, sir," said Jordan, following him to the center of the stage, while the com-

pany stood around in groups, eagerly awaiting what was to follow.

"We will begin with the most important scene," and Haswell, with manuscript in hand, took his place at the prompt table.

"The one where you come on with the sword?" asked Jordan. They had evidently talked it over before.

"Exactly, *Mister* Jordan."

Then Jordan went in the wings, Haswell gave him his cue, and he came out of the third entrance, running down the stage, shaking a cane, and declaring, "One word more, Sir Roger, and I'll run you through!" As he reached the center of the stage he came in abrupt contact with the Guv'nor, who had just come in, with so much force as to nearly throw them both.

"Great God!" exclaimed the Guv'nor, picking up his hat, which had been knocked flying.

"What's the matter with you anyway?" addressing Jordan, who was groping about,

looking for his very necessary glasses, lost in the encounter.

Seeing Haswell at the prompt table, and recalling the words that Jordan had just spoken, he took in the situation at a glance, and without waiting for the explanation that Jordan was about to stammer, said, "Stop this damn nonsense; it's gone far enough."

"I hope you're not angry, Guv'nor," in the old, frightened tones.

"No, you simply made a mistake," he said kindly, and then he turned away and eyed Haswell angrily.

The company had enjoyed as much of this farcical rehearsal as it had seen, and thirsted for more, but the Guv'nor's embargo had settled it. It settled more than the mock rehearsals. Jordan was broken in spirit, and when that evening he had, after many "mistakes," dressed the Guv'nor for the first act, and he was alone in the dressing room, the tears rolled down his cheeks.

A kind word would have done a lot for him then but nobody thought of it;

even Haswell, from whom it was due, told him, instead, that Mr. Stevens had stopped the rehearsals because he was afraid that Jordan would become too valuable, and he would have to increase his salary.

"No," said Jordan, soberly, "I don't think it's that. He doesn't think I could play the part."

That was Haswell's cue to really help the boy, but he didn't take it up.

And so Jordan dressed the Guv'nor upside down that night several times, gave him the wrong wigs, wiped his face with port wine instead of alcohol, and generally showed that his heart was elsewhere. The Guv'nor was patient, but Daniels, who came in between acts to talk business, was not, and swore persistently at him, only making matters worse.

The star and the manager walked home to the hotel together. The next day was Sunday. We had finished our two weeks in the East, and would go to New York to-morrow to lay off a week (Christmas week), after which we went West to begin our tour in earnest.



"Well," said Daniels, after they got away from Jordan, "does he go?" Ever since that first blunder of Jordan's and the interview with him about what happened to his previous employers, Daniels had sought pretext after pretext to get rid of him, but the Guv'nor liked him, and he refused to part with him. He thought for a moment, and said, rather sadly, "Yes, I suppose he must go."

* * * *

We were to leave New York, for Lansing, Michigan, at noon Saturday, and arrive there Sunday, opening the Western tour with a matinee in that town on Christmas Day. Daniels had rather peculiar ideas about business and honor, and he let Jordan think during all the week we "laid off" that he was still to go with the show. He would not have given him even his "notice salary," if the Guv'nor had not insisted.

"The Chief," fine old man, and superb actor, came down to the depot and got on board the train, with tears in his eyes. He had stopped at the office on his way

to the train; Jordan was there, patiently waiting for Daniels to appear — Daniels, who had gone West two days before. The Chief couldn't lie to him; he told him that we would start in an hour, and a new dresser would go with us.

The boy's face became ghastly white; a tremor ran through his body, and he leaned against the wall for support.

"Oh, it isn't true, Mr. Beaver, is it? "It isn't true, is it?" and he broke out into tears. "The Guv'nor was so kind to me, and I never had a position like this before. Can't I go? Can't I go?"

The Chief tried to comfort him, but it was no use, and left him sorrowfully, the boy sobbing as though his heart wonld break.

* * * *

We came into dinner that Christmas Day, a very subdued party. The day had not borne out the bright prospects of the warm, sunny morning. The snow was falling, and a cold wind blowing.

"Hardly a pleasant Christmas," said

Haswell, a trifle nervously, looking out of the window.

"Hardly," said the Chief, in a low tone.

The Guv'nor came in and took his seat at the head of the table, silently. He carried in his hand a special delivery letter that had been handed to him as he entered the dining room. The Guv'nor eyed the handwriting, but it was evidently strange to him. He broke open the envelope and read the letter. His eyeglasses dropped suddenly from his nose; he drew his lips together with a suppressed exclamation, and picking up his eyeglasses again, put them on, saying, in a voice slightly tremulous, "here is something I would like to read to you," and he opened the letter and read:

"Dear Guv'nor:—

I wish you a Merry Christmas. I am sorry if I wasn't a good dresser. I guess I am a failure in life.

Respectfully,

WALTER E. JORDAN."

"Poor boy," said the Guv'nor sadly, "that was his last mistake."



Love Letters of an Actor



Love Letters of an Actor

Miss Daisy Brewer to Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke, of the Mme. Brisi Co. Grand Opera House.

CHICAGO, ILL., *Nov.* 15, 1901.

MY DEAR MR. HOLBROOKE:

I don't know whether you remember my being introduced to you last summer at Saybrook, L.I., by a mutual friend, Mr. Rhoades, but I have my pleasant recollections of the meeting, and was simply delighted when I saw in Sunday's papers that you were in the cast of Mme. Brisi. I was at the theater last night, and thought your Lovelace very beautiful.

I should be very glad to have you call to see us.

Very sincerely,
DAISY BREWER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke to Miss Trixie Teller.
" The French Girl Co.," Casino, N. Y.

CHICAGO, *Nov.* 16, 1901.

MY OWN SWEET LITTLE GIRL:

First let me say, dearest Trixie, I love you just as much as ever, and if I have not written to you it is because we have been rushed to death with the bloody changes that Gallatin, the author, is making in the piece. I got beautiful notices, as you will see by the enclosed clippings. I get a round of applause every night when I come on, and if it wasn't for the Madame's jealousy, and her cutting out two of my longest speeches, I would really be the star. As it is, Joe Stevens tells me I've made the hit of the piece, and am really the whole show. I predict that the New York critics will go wild over the way I do the love scene. There isn't another actor in the country that could give it just the exact touch that I do. Judging by the papers, I would say we had 'em, but I don't think the people are coming. The houses are good, but I think they are papered, though they are

just as stingy as ever with their passes. Just think of it—leading man, and I can't get one pass for a friend. That's the worst of being with these so-called good companies.

A number of swell people that I met down at Saybrook, L.I., last summer, have written to me that my part is beautiful, and have offered me all sorts of attentions, dinners, and receptions and things, but I have accepted none of them, as I don't care to go anywhere or meet anybody, as I love my dear, sweet Trixie more than the swellest girl in the world.

I never did like Chicago, though the living here is cheap. It's a very dull place, and I long for New York and my own dear sweetheart. With all my love,

Your affectionate
MORTIMER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Daisy Brewer.

CHICAGO, ILL., *Nov.* 16, 1901.

DEAR MISS BREWER:

Your delightful note was a most agree-

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able surprise to me. I remember our meeting with distinct pleasure. As we give a matinee to-morrow, I shall call Thursday afternoon.

Very sincerely,
MORTIMER HOLBROOKE.

Miss Daisy Brewer
to Miss May Benson.

CHICACO, *Nov.* 17, 1901.

DEAR MAY:

Mortimer Holbrooke, the actor, is coming to-morrow. Come down about four. Wear your red frock; I am going to wear my blue one.

With love,
DAISY.

Miss Daisy Brewer
to Miss May Benson.

CHICAGO, *Nov.* 19, 1901.

DEAREST MAY:

Awfully sorry you couldn't get down yesterday. Mortimer Holbrooke came, and he was just too lovely for anything. He has the most beautiful eyes in the world, and such a voice and perfect

manners. He's coming to lunch next Monday. Will come up Sunday and tell you all about it.

With love,

DAISY.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Trixie Teller, Casino, N. Y.

CHICAGO, *Nov.* 21, 1901.

MY OWN DEAREST LITTLE TRIXIE:

Need I say that my love for you is as unchanging as the sea, and just as deep.

I am having a jolly time here, for although I tried to avoid them, the swell people I met at Saybrook, L.I., insisted on showing me attentions, and have really relieved the dreadful monotony. They give me a big luncheon to-morrow (Monday). I would not go, for I love my own dear little Trixie better than anybody in the world, but you know, dearest, it is good business to associate with swell people.

The play seems to be catching on at last, and I hear that we go into New York in March. This is joyful news to me,

especially because it will bring me near you, my own sweetheart.

Ever and ever,

MORTIMER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Daisy Brewer.

CHICAGO, *Thursday, Nov.* 25, 1901.

DEAREST DAISY:

The cruelest of fates will prevent me from coming up to lunch to-day, as a rehearsal has been called for 12, and I will not get through probably until 4. I will come up then right from the theater.

Your devoted

MORTIMER.

Miss Daisy Brewer
to Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke.

CHICAGO, *Friday, Nov.* 26, 1901.

DEAREST MORTIMER:

Miss Benson wanted us to have lunch with her to-morrow, but as it was your last day in Chicago, I thought it would be nicer if we two had lunch together alone. Don't you think so, dear?

As you will have to leave early for the matinee, I suppose, come up early, say eleven.

Yours,

DAISY.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Trixie Teller, Casino, N. Y.

CHICAGO, *Nov. 27th*, 1901.

MY DEAR, MY VERY DEAR TRIXIE.

We leave Chicago to-night, and really, you don't know how sorry I feel. I've had a jolly time here. Luncheons were given me every day by the swellest kind of people. A big luncheon was given me to-day by the people I met at Saybrook. Of course I never would have accepted these various attentions, if it were not for the fact that it is good business, and shows the management that I am popular, and have lots of friends.

You must excuse me from writing more, my dearest; I am tired out after the afternoon performance, and have to get ready, as the trunks are taken up at eight o'clock.

I was awfully glad to hear that you are to have a speaking part in the new play.

Affectionately,
MORTIMER HOLBROOKE.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Daisy Brewer, Chicago, Ill.

WASHINGTON, *Dec*, 3, 1901.

MY OWN DEAR SWEET LITTLE DAISY:

What a dear little charming woman you are! I have been awfully blue since leaving Chicago, because I there enjoyed myself more than ever I did any place else, and because I saw you so often. You are wrong, you dear girl, about talking about "monopolizing" me, because I didn't know anybody but members of the Company, and then anyway, I wouldn't have cared to have been entertained by anybody but you. Of course I would like to have met Miss Benson and some of the other friends you spoke of, but we actors love our art so much that we don't care very much for society or social attentions.

Your proposition to write to me every day fills me with delight, and I too will

write to you every day; but if my letters are not as long as yours, you must know it is because I am too busy, and not because you love me more than I love you.

You are wrong about my loving anybody else. I never did, and never will love anybody as much as I love you.

With all my love,

MORTIMER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Trixie Teller, Casino, N. Y.

WASHINGTON, *Dec.* 3, 1901.

DEAREST TRIXIE:

We opened Monday night to standing room, and although Pollort is at the Columbia, and "The City Madam" at the Lafayette, we have been playing to splendid houses. My notices were simply great. I enclose them. I am quite sure that New York will go wild over me.

Dearest Trixie, you are all wrong about my love for you growing cold. You needn't be a bit jealous about those "Saybrook people," for although they were wealthy, they didn't appeal to me a

bit. To show you how little I cared for them, I could probably remember the names of only one or two of them now.

We are breaking in a new leading lady, so I have to rush off to rehearsal.

With all my love,

MORTIMER.

Next two weeks all one-night stands—rotten! Norfolk, Richmond, Savannah, Charleston, Atlanta, Montgomery, Mobile, Chattanooga, and Louisville.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Trixie Teller, Casino, N. Y.

SAVANNAH, Ga., *Dec.* 6, 1901.

DEAREST TRIXIE:

You accuse me very unjustly of forgeting you. The traveling has been fierce; that is why I haven't written you this week. I love you, you dear girl, with all my soul. We leave early in the morning. Will write you a longer letter next Sunday.

Affectionately,

MORTIMER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Daisy Brewer, Chicago, Ill.

SAVANNAH, Ga., *Dec.* 6, 1901.

MY OWN DEAR, SWEET LITTLE GIRL:

Need I say to you that my love for you is as deep as the sea and as unchanging.

I was not able to write last night, on account of taking sleeper immediately after the show. We will play in St. Louis in two weeks, and the thing that makes me most anxious to get there is the fact that it will be so near Chicago and the dearest girl in the world. If you could only come down and visit those friends of yours in St. Louis that you spoke of, how lovely it would be! Don't worry, dear Daisy, about any other girl. There is no other girl.

With all my love,

Yours,

MORTIMER.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke to Mr. John Alburn,
"The Empress Josephine Co.," Grand
Opera House, Chicago, Ill.

SAVANNAH, Ga., *Dec.* 6, 1901.

MY DEAR JACK:

Saw in the "Theater" to-day that you

are in Chicago. How's business? We're doing fine down here, though the traveling is fierce. You have doubtless heard that I have made the hit of the piece. I predict New York will go wild over the way I do the love scene. I don't think any other actor could give the exact touch that I do.

I thought as you are pretty well acquainted with Chicago, you might give a little information—in strict confidence, you understand? Do you know the Brewers, or anything about them, on 212 —— Street? Could you find out about them? Are they very wealthy? There's a nice little girl, called Daisy, who's clean gone on a friend of mine, and I was just curious to know.

Yours sincerely,
MORTIMER HOLBROOKE.

Mr. John Alburn to Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke, Mme. Brisi Co., Montgomery, Ala.

CHICAGO, Ill., *Dec.* 9, 1901.

MY DEAR HOLBROOKE:

Rather surprised to hear from you.

Didn't suspect you of the letter-writing habit, nor quite understand why I, a poor low comedian, of all your numerous admirers, should be so favored.

Of course I had heard you were the hit of the piece. You always were the hit of the piece. What has amazed me is that the American press and public and the theatrical managers of the world should remain so long oblivious of your great merit. I haven't the slightest doubt but that New York will go wild over the way you do the love scene. If there's no wildness, it will be New York's fault—not yours. I can see old Willy Winter and Dithmar standing on their seats and throwing their hats up in the air. If they don't, they either are prejudiced or have been bought.

The last part of your letter, pertaining to certain Brewers, of 212 —— Street, was particularly interesting to me, as showing how impersonal and unselfish the members of our profession are. Where else in the world would you find a man thoughtfully looking up the financial

standing of a friend's prospective fiancée? Moved by this generosity, I went to considerable pains to obtain the information desired. The Brewers of 212 —— Street will leave 212 on May 1st, and move to a house at No. 214 —— Street. Though the number is very nearly the same, the house is not ; it is a *pension*—cheap. Old man Brewer has been living beyond his means for a year, a condition of affairs brought about by his ambitious daughter. They never really belonged in the kind of house they are living in. If your "friend" remembers, Mrs. Brewer is a rather coarse and vulgar woman, and shows the origin. To be pointed—the Brewers are not wealthy, and never were.

It might interest your "friend," however, to know that Miss Daisy Brewer has a friend, Miss May Benson, of 119 —— Street, whose wealth is not fictitious. I would advise him on his next visit to Chicago to look her up. I have the best of information to the effect that her wealth is not of the vanishable kind.

Sincerely,

JOHN ALBURN.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Daisy Brewer, Chicago, Ill.

LOUISVILLE, Ky., *Dec.* 16, 1901.

MY DEAR DAISY:

I have not written to you for several days, for I have been carefully thinking how foolish it is for us to continue this correspondence. I am so wedded to my art that I never could give you all the love that you deserve, and so I think it would be unwise for you to come down to St. Louis, despite the fact that it would give me the greatest pleasure. We will always be friends, though, I am sure, and I shall always think of you with pride, remembering how good you were to me, and what a merry little woman you are.

Yours sincerely,
MORTIMER HOLBROOKE.

P.S.—Please send back notices.

Mr. Mortimer Holbrooke
to Miss Trixie Teller, Casino, N. Y.

LOUISVILLE, Ky., *Dec.* 16, 1901.

MY OWN DEAR, SWEET LITTLE TRIXIE:

You must forgive me, my sweetheart,

if I have not written to you in a week, but we have been very busy with traveling and extra matinées, and although I longed to write to you, and tell you how much I love you, I really had not the time.

Now, sweetheart, your last letter did me a great injustice, and I really begin to think that you do not love me. I don't see how you, knowing me as well as you do, and how much I love you, can write as you do. I only met one girl more than once in Chicago, a Miss Brewer, and I did not care for her at all. She has written me several notes since I left, but I have answered them in the most formal way, and have now made up my mind not to write to her again. But the idea that I could love her, or anybody else but my own Trixie, is simply monstrous.

You complain about my not sending you my notices. I lent them to the manager, and as soon as I get them back I will send them to you.

We play in Philadelphia after St. Louis, and then New York—indefinite! Isn't

that great? Just heard it! Am wild with delight, because it will bring me near the woman I love best. I am sure to make a big hit.

John Alburn, who is with the "Empress Josephine," wrote me from Chicago that he had heard a number of people say that I was the hit of the piece. Personally, I don't like Alburn, as I think he is inclined to be sarcastic. But I think he is really an admirer of mine. Now, sweetheart, this is a long letter, and will make up for not writing in a week. Hereafter I am going to write to you every day, to show you that my love for you has grown stronger.

With all my love,

MORTIMER.

A Romance a la Russe

A Romance a la Russe

IT was the old discussion about the merits of Rosenthal and Paderewski.

"Rosenthal plays like Nietzsche's great blonde brute," said Van,—he always had a literary simile.

"But when it comes to playing Chopin," —began Phil.

"Chopin? Why should any one play Chopin? It's wrong, all wrong. Bach, Beethoven and Brahms, my boy, and then—"

"Well, what then?"

"Brahms."

"And after that?"

"Brahms."

"And again?"

"Ad infinitum."

James was then writing those splendid studies of his on the "Piano Music of

Johannes Brahms." You have read them, of course, just as you have read his "Twisted Twirler of Tones," "The Composer of Cruel Delights," and other fascinating stories.

"Leaving aside De Pachman though," continued Phil, "don't you think that Careno—"

"No woman can play Chopin," Van said, breaking in on Phil's half-formed opinion.

"I knew a woman who played Chopin."

It was the first time that Stchernow had spoken that night, I might almost say that week. None of us knew him very well for he was a quiet, modest little fellow, with a tremendous technique, and seemingly no other ambition than to teach the few pupils who came to him, and then meet the crowd at night and listen. He never offered any opinions, seldom spoke unless there was a dispute about a fact, and then his information was not volunteered. The manner in which he joined in the conversation was, therefore, all the more interesting.

There was silence for a moment.

"Yes, she played Chopin and I knew her. Knew her too well."

"Too well but, not wis——" began Phil, when Van put his hand on the cub's mouth.

The waiter put fresh steins on the table, and we waited.

"It was in '77. I had gone to Weimar with Borodin to meet Liszt. My countryman believed and so did I that—those were the early dreams. She had gone there on the same mission and had been kindly received by the great master. She, like myself, was under the influence of the new school. We were almost of an age. She was very beautiful, as are all the Malorossian women, and soon she told me that she loved me as she would love no other. Sometimes she played as if she were a goddess. They called her the little giant. I used to think that not even the great one himself could surpass her in the mastery of the piano. You see I was very much in love. Then at other times she would become weak, feeble, she would

play like an amateur—she seemed to lose all interest in the great career that was before her.

"'Tell me, Fedor,' she said one day, 'would you love me if I did not play?'

"'Durotcha (little goose);' I said laughingly; "it is you I love—not Liszt.'

"Another day she said: 'Fedor, if I thought you did not love me I would die.'

"'Then you will always live, my love,' I said.

"'Ah, but if you should go from me.'

"There was something very sad in her life, but no one knew anything about her, and when I asked her, she would say mournfully, 'Some day, Fedor, some day.'

"One day, it was a month after I had come, I went to her hotel—she was gone. There was a card left for me, all it said was 'Good-by, good-by.'"

Stchernow was talking half dreamily. He went on:

"I made inquiries everywhere. At last I found that she had gone to London with her uncle, or her father, I did not

know then just who the old man was. I went back to my room and tried to play. I could not, I could do nothing. The next day I started for London. I was young.

"After three months my money was all gone, and I could not go back to Weimar. I did not want to, I was tired. I wrote to my brother here in America. My brother's name was Leslie—he said that all the Russians took that name when they came to this country—and he sent me money to come. He had a printing shop on East Broadway, and as soon as enough Russians had come to this country he intended to start a newspaper.

"My brother loaned me some money and I bought a piano and took a room on Division Street, near Essex. My landlady said that I might put up a sign. My brother had it painted; it read 'Charles Leslie—Piano, Voice, Composition.'

"By and by one pupil came, then my brother brought two, the landlady one—a year passed by and these four pupils were all. I did not care, I thought all the

time of her. Once a pupil came; she was wealthy my brother said, and when I asked her to play she began Chopin. I told her to go home—I would have nothing to do with her. It was very bad.

"More than a year had passed since I had seen her. I was coming from my brother's house on First Street one night. It was early in the Spring and the windows were but partly open. It was about ten o'clock; I was on Suffolk Street, near Grand. Suddenly I stopped and listened carefully for several moments. I told myself that I must be dreaming; my cheeks began to get warm, then burning, my temples began to throb. I leaned against the railing of a stoop and took off my hat—I was wild—I was delirious. A policeman came along and looked at me. I said to him:

"'Did you ever hear Chopin played like that?'

"He looked at me more closely, and then said, 'You had better put on your hat and go home.'

"'Yes, yes,' I said, and with my hat still in my hand I ran across the street and rang the bell.

Stchernow paused. The steins were again changed. Phil rubbed his eyes:

"Oh, yes! Let's see,—you started for London. Well, did you find her?"

Van kicked the cub's shins, and Stchernow with a quiet smile resumed:

"An old woman, a hag, opened the door. The playing had stopped. I spoke Russian. 'Ludmila,'—did I not tell you she was named after Pouschkin's poem—'Ludmila,' I said, 'I want to see her.' The woman shook her head, she did not understand. Then I spoke English; it was very bad English in these days. She did not know anything about the people on the second floor; they had not lived there long. She could not let me go up, as the man had quarreled with her for admitting another man. She would go, though, and tell him.

"I heard her knock at the door. It was opened very little, and then I heard her say my name. I could not hear any

more. She came back and said that the man said that he did not know me, there must be some mistake. I told the woman I was sure. I argued with her, I almost cried out, but she said that she could not go up again, and, besides, the man said that his wife was asleep.

"'His wife!'

"I ran out into the street. 'His wife! His wife!' I could not believe it. I walked up and down the street for hours and then I went home. When it was light I went back and waited. Once, twice, I had to hold myself up by a railing, I was so weak. At last the door opened. My heart almost burst! It was the old man, the same old man that I had seen with her at Weimar. I did not know what to make of it. I had understood that he was her father or her uncle; then I had not cared, I was thinking all the time of her. I ran over to him:

"'Don't you remember me?' I asked.

"He looked at me—his eyes were cold and bad—and he said: 'No.'

"'You do, you must,' I said. 'I am Fedor Stchernow; I was at Weimar; you were there, so was Ludmila. Tell me where Ludmila is. I heard her play last night. I know it was she.'

"'That was not Ludmila, that was my wife. Now I remember you. Ludmila, you want to see Ludmila? She has gone to Russia.'

"I knew he lied, but I could say nothing. My throat was dry; I was choking with anger and hate and love.

"'Well?' he said.

"'I heard Ludmila play last night,' I groaned. 'No one could play the B flat minor sonata as she played it.'

"'My wife plays very well. She studied with Liszt.'

"'Ludmila is your wife,' I cried.

"'You are crazy,' he said, and he walked away. He went as far as the corner, and stood there watching me. There was no hope, and so like a drunken man I went home. I lay in bed all afternoon. A pupil came, but I sent him away. I was too sick. At night I got up and went

again to Suffolk Street and rang the bell. The woman—she was a hag—opened the door again.

"'They have gone away,' she said. That woman knew how to say terrible things.

"'Tell me where, tell me where!' I said. 'I will give you all I have; I will make you rich—some day!'

"She seemed to take pity on me. She said she did not know where they had gone, but when the man came back the next day for his things she would try to find out. I asked her about Ludmila, but she had never seen the wife; she was an invalid, her husband said, and never went out.

"I went to my brother and told him all. At first he said that I was foolish. 'If she is married to her uncle, or whatever he is, why so much trouble?'

"'But she loves me; she told me so at Weimar. She is not married to him. She cannot be.'

"He shrugged his shoulders. "So much the worse."

"'Nicolai,' I said, 'if you talk like that I will kill you.'

"Then he became serious. He said that instead of depending on the old woman it would be best to watch and follow the man the next day.

"That night was a night of fever. And yet the next morning I was strong. I had faith. 'There is no power stronger than faith,' you know Gogol says. I waited at the corner behind a cart from the rising of the sun. At noon he came; several bundles were taken out and the wagon started. I ran all the way, although sometimes I thought I would have to stop—I was so weak. At times the wagon would turn in a side street and then turn out again. Then the old man would look around to see if any one was following him. I could not understand it. It could not be that he was afraid of me.

"At last the wagon reached Thirteenth Street and began to go towards the river. Then I noticed that another wagon was following. There was nothing in it, but a man was sitting by the driver who was

good looking, and was nicely dressed. When the old man's wagon stopped the other was not to be seen. So, soon the man I had observed came up to me and said :

"'You followed Minayeff up from Suffolk Street. Why?'

"I liked his manner; it was official. Still I was nervous. I said:

"'He says that he is married to my Lud— to my sweetheart. I do not believe it.'

"'Well, I guess he's married to her alright, for he licked hell out of her last night, and this morning she peached.'

"'You mean to say that he beat her?' I could hardly believe my ears.

"'That's it, and I guess it wasn't the first time, either.' Then he asked me what I knew about Minayeff. He was disappointed when he found that I knew so little. He made me tell him all about myself, and then he told me that Minayeff had cheated people in London and Paris, and that for three months the New York police had been looking for him. In

Paris he had tried to make money by his wife's playing—"she was musical," the man said (poor Ludmila)—but she was so weak that she had broken down, and then he had hit her before the audience. He was very nearly killed by some young men, but he managed to escape, taking Ludmila with him, and then it was found that he had taken money from many people. Several times he had tried to have Ludmila play in public, but she had refused, and then he had beat her. He knew she had great talent, but for some reason or other she would not use it. Last night they had a quarrel and he beat her again; the neighbors heard it and complained to the police. This man had come to see about it, and while Minayeff was out Ludmila had told him just who her husband was. He was very jubilant, the man was; he said there was a reward for the old man, and as soon as another policeman would come he would make the arrest.

"My own feelings, how can I describe them? Impatient to see Ludmila, love

for her, hatred for myself, curiosity, bitterness, everything—I was almost dizzy with too much thinking. At last the policeman came and I stood outside with him while the other went in. Soon they came out, Minayeff with his hand tied together. The second policeman joined them, and I was left alone.

" For a moment I stood. Could it be true that at last I was to see her? I was afraid to move lest I should wake up—and yet I knew it was true that she, my Ludmila, was across the street—but one moment from me! And yet, even now I feel it, there was that awful heaviness of the heart. I tried to make myself feel the way I had felt the night I had heard her playing on Suffolk Street. But somehow I could not be glad.

" The woman who opened the door simply said, ' One flight.' I started to go up, then I stopped. She—it was Ludmila—was playing Moussorgski's " Dying Soldier." You know how terrible it is, so weird and sad; it is Ophelia's mad scene in music. I went up softly. The door was

open ; she was singing the words to herself. I waited ; I would let her finish, although each note grew more terrible, more mournful. At last she neared the end ; her voice was getting weaker, the hot tears were running down my cheeks ; she came to the rallentando ; her voice seemed to die away :

" And he lay bleeding, forgot, then dead.'

" I could stand it no longer. I pushed open the door and cried :

" ' Ludmila ! '

" She turned, she rose. Her black hair, once so fine and sheen, was now loose and tangled and streaked with gray ; her eyes were dreary, her cheeks sunken and her lips thin and pale. There was a terrible look in her eyes ;

" ' Fedor ! Fedor ! ' she cried.

" She threw herself in my arms. I kissed her and she smiled as one in a dream. Then I felt how cold her arms were.

" ' Ludmila, my love,' I said, ' speak to me.'

"She opened her eyes and smiled. I kissed her again—she was dead!

"Before Minayeff went to prison he told me that he was Ludmila's guardian, and that letters that she had left for me at Weimar and that she had sent to me from London he had burned, knowing how much she had loved me. Then she married him, and one night—'I was a fool,' he said—he told her that her letters had never been sent. Then she would play no more, and as he had married her for that, they quarreled.

"Yes, Ludmila played Chopin, and I, too, perhaps would have played Chopin if——but, pshaw! those were the early dreams."

There was silence for a moment, then Phil:

"Did any one say 'beer?'"

And that was the night that Luchow said people were foolish who went to the Klondike.

"Warum? Zu sentimentalischen musikanten bier verkaufen ist besser."

And Herr August is right.

Peter's Fortune



Peter's Fortune

PETER had but the vaguest idea what he would do with his fortune when he got it, but that it would come, and come soon, he never doubted for an instant. There never was a time when it seemed much further off than the morrow, and, though the sun might set and he be no nearer the golden land of which he dreamed so much, he remained as hopeful and sanguine and cheerful as ever.

There were times that his fortune seemed more imminent than usual, when he turned restlessly in his sleep, as the numerous dollars insisted upon being counted, when the burdens of wealth vexed him, but the awakening to his real and impoverished condition never discouraged him.

In a way, the reason of this was that Peter had no keen capacity for suffering.

He had moments of bitter anguish and actual pain, moments of disappointment and distrust, but they went quickly and left no mark on his happy nature.

It cannot be said that Peter was always thus. When he was six years of age he had found resource in tears, which often lasted long after the actual pain or disappointment, and until appeasement had come in murmured sympathy or such substantial form as the family exchequer might allow. But now that he was seven years of age and had come to an understanding of his own, insults, punishments and neglect passed out of his mind as quickly as they came, and he viewed them as they can only be viewed if real calm is desired—through the glass of forgetfulness.

In a word Peter had become hardened; he had become self-centered, and though he took the pleasures that his sphere afforded, and rendered love and dutiful obedience to those in a position to force it, he concentrated his mental energy on evolving a fortune.

Up to this particular morning he had been able to give but one day a week to the actual pursuit for wealth. The dull academic training of the public school confined him for the best part of the day, from nine to three, in a most distasteful prison. Saturday alone gave him time for the flights of fancy and foot excursions that made the fortune seem near and real. Along the streets down town he trudged, examining the various signs for one that would indicate to his mind "pictures," as he called the illustrated business or advertising cards, souvenirs, lithos., etc.

These Saturday excursions had taken Peter over pretty nearly all the lower part of the town. He had thought often of venturing into the unknown regions of "uptown," and had once got as far as Fourteenth Street; but the visit had been so unproductive of pictures or anything in the way of "finds" that he had put his journey off until he should have time to penetrate the absolute heart of "uptown," which he understood was somewhere about Twenty-third Street. He had heard

golden stories about the "finds" in this locality from Barfiel, though Michalls had said there was nothing to be gotten there unless you begged. This had forced Peter to the conclusion that Jews are either lucky or liars, for Barfiel was a Jew. Revolving once in his mind the fortune-that-was-to-be, he contemplated enviously the wealth of the Barfiels—the father owned the hat store on the ground floor of the tenement, and the son had more than the usual number of pennies possessed by the friends of Peter. In the face of this luxurious living, Peter, had it not been that he knew such desire would have forfeited him his soul, would have wished that he was a Jew.

For part of the educational plan under which he was being reared included regular attendance in a white waist and trousers kept especially for this occasion, at Sunday School. He knew by heart the attributes of Him who made him, he knew where he would go if he was bad, which didn't trouble him much, and he knew (which was more to his liking) where

he would go if he was good—a place that he dimly imagined as somewhere north of Twenty-third Street, if what Barfiel said was true. In a moment of querulous anger with that friend it was a source of satisfaction for him to think that if Barfiel could go to Twenty-third, he could not by reason of his religion go any further. And on another occasion, when angry, fired by the coachings of the Sunday School, he had accused Barfiel, who though a year older was several inches smaller, of having been directly interested in and personally responsible for the Crucifixion of the Saviour. To this religious knowledge and zeal Peter added a complete verbal mastery of the ten commandments. Some of them he didn't quite see the use of, but the others he approved of except that which prevented swearing. This caused him much perturbation, for at night when he looked over the day's doings, by instruction of the Sunday School teacher, to see if he had sinned, he would remember that he had sworn, and then he would be obliged to pray the Lord to

forgive him for having damned some youthful "chester" or "tattletale," who, if the Lord would only look at things in the right way, was deserving of being double-damned.

It was six o'clock (his usual rising hour) when Peter jumped out of bed on this particular July morning. After breakfast he trudged along for a block or two with his father, who, bidding him good-by, enjoined him to be good and not to give his mother trouble. Peter promised very readily to do this. Peter, it might be said, was of a promising disposition.

None of his play companions had yet made their appearance on the street, and the large number of working men and women rushing along Catherine and Madison streets gave him a sense of superiority over Barfiel and Michalls and the other boys who knew nothing of the charms of early rising. Surely this was a golden Saturday; no moment of it must be lost, for who could tell but this might be the day in which he was to achieve his fortune.

Twenty-third Street came to his mind vividly, and he thought with bated breath that he had all day before him, and that he could penetrate into the very fastness of that golden land.

At a more rapid pace than was his wont he passed up the Bowery and through Third Avenue to Twenty-third Street. Along that thoroughfare, just beginning to become populated, he walked, eyes open and every faculty alert, but aside from a series of novel impressions he added nothing to his stock.

By the time he reached Sixth Avenue the crowd of shoppers were jostling him to and fro, and as he turned up Sixth Avenue be began to think that this land, this golden land, was but a dream or a fiction of his playmates. On one or two of the side streets off Sixth Avenue he saw waste barrels that looked promising, but there were nothing but large paper boxes, none of the things that would have made his journey remunerative. He went into several large stores, one drug store,

and then a trunk store. He made the usual request for picture cards, but several of these attempts showed him how futile they were, and how little he was understood in this strange land.

Downtown again, along the avenue, dispirited and somewhat disgusted, he proceeded. In the neighborhood of the twenties he recollected that Broadway had been very highly referred to, and he started east, hoping for better results.

It was after one o'clock, and he had had nothing to eat since his breakfast. Somewhat tired out he sat down on the high stoop to rest for a few minutes, and with that industrious spirit that characterizes fortune hunters of his age, began to knock off the paint on the iron railing with his stick. The work proved interesting, and he was industriously hammering away when he was seized from behind by the collar.

A man and woman had come out of the house unperceived by him, and after viewing his labors with some amusement, the escort of the lady, against her protest,

had brought this abrupt end to the scene.

"Le' me go!" shouted Peter.

"What are you doing that for?" said the man.

"Nothing," said Peter.

"Well," said the man, "I can hardly believe it; you were working as though you were getting two dollars a day for it."

And he loosened his grip so that Peter could stand more comfortably, although he could not get away.

"Don't, Charlie," said the lady; "he did not mean any harm." Peter looked up rather thankfully.

"Where do you live?" said the man, turning to him with a pleasant smile.

"On Madison," replied Peter.

"Street or Avenue?" said the man, winking at the lady.

Peter vaguely perceived that he was the subject of some sort of ridicule, and the pride of his ancestors rose strong within him, and he wrenched himself free as he shouted:

"Go to hell!"

The man nearly doubled with laughter,

while the lady with difficulty contained her amusement. But Peter was not as free as he thought he was.

"I do not mean you any harm, sonny," he said, and he let Peter go, and then dived down into his pocket and brought out some small change.

At this sight Peter did not attempt to run, but stopped and began to think that after all this men's method of jesting, while it had its disagreeable side, was not with out its advantages.

"What a fine little Peter he would make," said the lady.

"Corking," replied the man. "What is your name?" he asked the boy.

"Peter," he answered.

"Humph!" said the man, "that is funny. Have you ever been to the theater?"

"Theater?" said Peter. "No," he answered eagerly.

He scented something in the man's method of asking the question. The man looked at him for a moment, and then turning to his companion said :

"Do you know, Ella, I do not think it would be a bad idea to take him to the theater in case Willie is not all right. We could use him, and, anyway, it would be a treat for the little fellow."

Then he turned to Peter.

"What time have you got to be home, Peter?"

"No time," answered Peter.

The lady laughed. "Have you a latch-key?" she said.

Peter was again tempted to make profane reply at this talking over his head, but he restrained himself, and simply stared in open-eyed expectation at the two.

"Now, sonny," said the man, "if you will come along with us we will take you to the theater, and if the little boy that comes on the stage with us is sick, and you go on in his place, we will give you half a dollar; if he is not sick we will get you a seat, and you can see the show. How does that strike you?"

"Gee!" said Peter, and then words

failed to express all he would like to have said.

The three proceeded west and down Sixth Avenue, the lady making many inquiries into the life Peter lived, his parents and his education. His answers frequently, he observed, were commented on by the man in a fashion that seemed to amuse the lady, and that would have aroused the ire of Peter were it not for the benefits that were to be. As they turned into one of the side streets the man said :

" I tell you I will be mighty glad next Saturday night when the season is over. The idea of playing until the middle of July ! "

The three stopped at a small, narrow door; the man opened it. The lady went in, followed by Peter, and then the conductor.

" Hello, Jim," said both the man and the woman to the shirt-sleeved old fellow who sat at a little window, where his head was just visible.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Whipple, afternoon, Mr. Whipple."

"Has Willie come?" said Mr. Whipple.

"He has come," said the shirt-sleeved man, "but it is a shame to make that child go on."

"Good" said Mr. Whipple, "he won't need to go on. We found a little fellow who will do beautifully."

"Come on, Peter," he said joyously, "you are going to make your début this afternoon."

Peter did not know what that was, but he knew he was going to make a half dollar, and he trotted along eagerly after Mr. Whipple, across drops, and over a large open space in front of which hung a heavy white cloth and at the back of which were painted woods, and forests, and palaces, and rivers, and, as he said afterwards, "almost every old thing."

"Where's Hallen?"

"Here, sir."

A large, clean-shaven man came out of one of a number of small rooms opening on the stage.

"You do not need to send Willie on this afternoon; this little chap here will take his place."

"All right, sir," said Hallen, and then he bowed very obsequiously to Peter, and said, "Very pleased to meet you, young gentleman."

While he felt that the man's intention was all right, there was an irresistible longing in Peter's mind, the same sort of longing that came whenever he saw a silk hat pass through Catherine Street—a longing for a soft tomato; but during the past three-quarters of an hour he had learned to curb all these primitive and natural impulses, and he remained silent.

"Joe," said Mr. Whipple, calling aloud, "come down here."

A boy of about twenty came down the narrow stairs that led up along the brick wall, and walked up to the star. To Peter's amazement Mr. Whipple viewed his astounding appearance with absolute calmness.

Joe's cheeks were redder than any red Peter had ever seen. Over the lower

part of his face was a lot of white paint, while crossing his face up and down were black lines. He was the most amazing creature that Peter had ever beheld. For a moment his breath left him, and his impulse was to get behind his protector; but then noticing that the others were calm and fearless, he pulled himself together and remained where he was.

"I see you are 'made up,' Joe, so that you have plenty of time to take this little chap here and get him into Willie's clothes; they will just fit him. Put on the wig and make him up."

Peter drew back as he saw he was about to be delivered into the hands of this wild-looking creature. Whipple and Hallen both laughed when they saw the reason of his hesitation. Joe himself was slower in perceiving it.

"He is afraid of you, Joe," said Mr. Whipple. "He does not quite understand the art of make-up."

"Oh, Gad!" replied Joe, "that is funny.

"Don't be afraid of me," he said, turn-

ing to Peter, "this is only paint I have on;" and then, before either could say a word, he began turning somersaults, standing on his head, then on one hand, grinning and laughing, and making funny faces all the time. From fear and distrust Peter became wrapt with admiration and reverence.

Peter took Joe's hand gladly after this exhibition, and the two proceeded up the narrow staircase along the wall to Joe's dressing-room. Willie's stage costumes had already been placed there, and Joe made faces and told Peter funny stories while he proceeded to disrobe him. He had taken off Peter's somewhat tattered apparel and put on the beautiful new velvet knee-breeches, without stirring Peter's soul. He started to put on the velvet coat, when the boy exclaimed:

"Where's the waist?"

"What waist?" said Joe.

"You always have on a waist, don't you?" said Peter. He was thinking of Sunday School.

"Oh," said Joe, as the idea percolated through him.

"Well, on the stage, you see, we only put on what is necessary." And he put on a piece of white linen around Peter's neck, and then put on and buttoned the coat, pushed the boy over to the looking-glass, and said:

"Now, you see, you look as though you had a waist on, and that saves expense —we need the money," the point of which was lost on Peter.

When he had him dressed Joe started to wash his face, and then Peter rebelled. He did not mind being dressed up in Sunday clothes for some unknown reason on Saturday afternoon, but to have his face washed in broad daylight, with no apparent reason for it, was going a little too far. He submitted, however, very readily to being "made up" when Joe told him he would look as funny as he did when his cheeks were painted and his eyebrows fixed.

"Curtain up," called a man from down below.

"Come along, Peter," said Joe, and they went down-stairs.

Where before there had been a broad open space, there was now an imitation restaurant with people moving about, and music coming from the other side of a row of lights, beyond which lights Peter could dimly see, from between the wings, a face here and there.

"You'll go on in a little while, Peter," said Joe, "and all you have got to do is to stick to me." A minute later he said, "Come on," grabbed the boy by the hand, and from the darkened space between the wings Peter suddenly found himself in a flood of light among a lot of people who were talking in unnaturally high tones, addressing one another without ever looking at the people they were talking to, and evidently very much excited about something, which something he vaguely, but nevertheless definitely, decided was on the other and mystic side of the row of lights, into which he occasionally peered. Once or twice he was able to see an upturned face.

"My God, my child!" exclaimed a woman rushing up to him and putting her arms about him. Despite her remarkable change of apparel and the fact that she was almost as red as Joe, Peter recognized Mrs. Whipple. Had anybody else attempted the liberty, Peter would have had considerable to answer for to his Sunday-school teacher. The woman was dragged away by several other men, much to Peter's relief, despite the fact 'twas Mrs. Whipple. There was a fight on the stage, the lights went out suddenly. Peter heard one or two pistol-shots, and then he was picked up and carried bodily off, amid the playing of fierce music and the descending of the curtain.

When he found himself free, Joe was standing alongside of him, grinning.

"What do you think of it, Peter?" Joe said.

"What happened?" said Peter.

"That is part of the play," said Joe.

Peter could only gaze about in dumb amazement.

"Now you do not have to do anything

more until the last act, when you go on with me again," said Joe.

During the entr'acte Peter met nearly all the leading members of the company. Some of them gave him nickels, some dimes, and Peter began to wonder where it would end, when Joe reappeared.

"I think, old chap, you had better come up in my room and stay there until it is time to go on."

He followed reluctantly, for it seemed to him he was leaving the seat of his fortune. But his companion came to him every little while and made such queer faces for him that he forgot his pecuniary loss.

"Everybody ready ; fifth act."

"Come along," said Joe to Peter, and they came down the narrow staircase again. They stood in the wings for a moment or two, the curtain went up, and then Joe said :

"Now, little chap, if you do as well as you did in the first act, you are a regular Henry Irving. When an old chap gives you a bunch of money and tells you to

run home to your mother, you want to leave him and run. Do you understand?"

"All right," said Peter, and then in another moment he was pushed forward on the stage.

"Help the poor, sir," said Joe, going up to the very finely-dressed gentleman who was about to cross the stage.

The old gentleman stopped, put his hand in his pocket, and then looked at Peter and said:

"Great God! This is not her child, and yet——"

Joe suddenly sank down on his knees. "Oh, Sir Reginald!" he said.

"Great Heaven! Gower, is it you?" said the old gentleman again.

"Then it is her child," he went on, apparently overcome with emotion, "begging—her child begging!"

"Yes," said Gower, "we had to do it."

"Where is she?" said Sir Reginald.

"Dying for want of food," said Gower, "only two blocks away."

Sir Reginald seemed about to faint, but he recovered himself, and, pulling a

large wallet out of his pocket, took a roll of bills, handed them to Peter, and said:

"Run with this to your mother and tell her I am coming. You, Gower, show me the way."

"Get along, kid," said Joe in a stage whisper, and Peter, remembering his instructions, ran off the stage. When he got in the wings he looked at the roll of bills in his hand, thought of the many days he had dreamed of his fortune, stood stock-still, remembering Sunday-school injunctions, and then his mind going over what these people had said, "that he was to take this home to his mother," came quickly to a decision that left no doubt, and without a moment's hesitation bolted out through the stage, past the amazed doorkeeper, down Fifteenth Street to Sixth Avenue, thence down the avenue to Fourteenth Street and on toward Third Avenue and the Bowery.

As he left the theater he tucked the bills in his breast, and it was well that he did so, for he had hardly gotten a block

when two or three young ragamuffins, attracted by his blue velvet clothes, his golden wig and painted face, began to chase him. Under ordinary circumstances, their calling after him "Yellow Kid" would have caused him to stop and fight, but he was in a hurry to obey the instructions of Sir Reginald and get the money home to his mother; so he kept on running. As he turned into the Bowery from Third Avenue at Fourth Street, the crowd of boys that had pursued him numbered about twenty. Two coming up the Bowery saw him and got immediately in his way.

In his stage apparel Peter looked a delicate child of luxury, but when the first little ragamuffin coming up the Bowery made a pass at him he speedily learned that appearances were deceiving, for Peter was as skilled in the manly art as any boy of seven on Catherine Street, and his would-be interferer was knocked breathless into the gutter. The second ragamuffin succeeded in getting Peter's hat, and with it off came the wig, which

so took away the breath of the assailant that Peter had a clear road.

A policeman at the corner of Houston Street stopped him.

"Who painted your face?" he said to Peter.

"I was in a teeater," said Peter.

"Well, you had better wash your face before you go any further," and he took Peter into the saloon on the corner and rubbed his face with the end of a dirty towel. The guardian of the peace meanwhile had dispersed the antagonistic crowd of followers.

Hatless and wigless, and with his face dirty enough to make him an object of no interest, Peter continued his way down the Bowery to Catherine Street. Never before had he mounted the four flights of stairs that led to his domicile with more alacrity. He burst into the kitchen where his mother was busy preparing supper, exclaiming, "I have got it! I have got it!"

"Got what?" said the good woman, not even turning around, for she was used to the excitable outbursts of her son.

"Got the money, lots of it," said Peter, and he pulled out of his breast the large roll of bank bills that had been given him by Sir Reginald. At the first sight of them Mrs. Mahon turned pale.

"Where did you get that?" she said, grabbing the roll from Peter. But before he had time to reply she had opened them out, and read on the concealed side of the roll, "Buy your shoes at Stacey's."

"Why, that is nothing but an advertisement," she said. "Where did you get it?"

Her tone was one of relief, for she had not been overjoyed by the sight of so much money in the hands of the boy.

"In the teeater," said Peter, with wrinkled brow, not understanding why she threw to him his fortune.

"Theater," she exclaimed, "then it is stage money. What theater?"

Peter could not tell, nor could he give the exact location.

"And it is not good?" he said after he had told his story.

"No, Peter," said his mother kindly,

seeing how great was his disappointment. "They were simply making believe, and they did not mean for you to come to me when they said, 'Go to your mother.'"

"Then I will have to take it back," he said, more troubled than ever.

"I guess not," said his mother, "they have probably all of this kind of money that they want."

"Perhaps they will come after me," said Peter.

"Perhaps they will," said his mother, with a laugh.

But they never came, and Peter kept his fortune until he grew tired of counting it, and then he exchanged it for four agates, a broken tin horn and a striped umbrella.

The Horse that "Starred"

The Horse that "Starred"

THE half-hour had been called before Stearns appeared. He was excited and flushed and evidently in deep pain. He passed along the hall glancing quickly into the dressing-rooms, but in all the occupants were busy. Before the one next to his own, and the last, he stopped. The chief was an actor of the old school, steady, reliable, always reached the theater an hour before the half-hour was called, finished his dressing, quietly smoked his cigar and waited. Here was the some one that Stearns was looking for, some one not occupied with the troubles of make-up and costume, some one who could give undivided attention.

Stearns stopped at the door, leaned against the wainscoting, took his hat off,

wiped the perspiration from his forehead and said:

"Gee!"

The chief puffed thoughtfully on his cigar.

"You're late, ain't you, Walter?" he said, after a few seconds that seemed minutes to Stearns.

"Not much," answering the question quickly and ending with another explosion:

"Gad!"

The chief's sense of humor was working, and he was not inclined to help out the suffering comrade.

"I just got a letter from my daughter," he began.

"Did you?" interrupted Stearns, politely, and then with a still greater vehemence:

"Great gad!"

There was no way to get out of it and the chief in surprised tones, as though Stearn's perturbation had just dawned on him, said:

"Is anything the matter?"

"Is anything the matter? Gee! You never saw such luck. I've just lost a hundred dollars."

"A hundred?"

"Yes, a hundred. I stood to win a clear hundred, a sure thing, a ten-to-one shot; was going to play it—almost had my bet made when the fool owner of Amazon talked me out of it and got me to play his old sawbones. Did you ever hear of such luck?"

"Well, you only lost ten."

"Yes, only ten real cash, but that hundred was such a sure thing."

"Gambling, my son," began the chief in a solemn, ponderous tone. But Stearns had disappeared in disgust, leaving the old actor to chuckle.

That was the beginning of Stearns' misfortune. Had Amazon won that race and Stearns won his bet, Stearns, who a year ago was one of the best leading juvenile men in this country, would not now be playing second old man. The week that followed that race not only nearly wrecked a first-class theatrical organization, but

turned a clever, handsome young actor into a ponderous and rather sad first old man.

All during the performance Stearns when not on, stood in the wings and made unpretty remarks about his luck. Your actor may start his career as patient as Job, but in a short time he will become a kicker and all because of these waits in the wings.

Stearns did not find any one to listen to him between the half hour and overture, but in the wings he found plenty, and he told his story to every member of the company from the star down to Fettler, the property man. To the ingénue he told it twice.

The curtain had hardly gone down when a florid, stout, and very nearly typical old Southern gentleman (the sort of chap, that, off the stage, just drinks whisky and is rather uninteresting, and that on is always defending an insulted daughter), rushed through the stage door calling for Mr. Stearns. Everybody recognized him as Mr. Lehman, the owner of Amazon. The

general rush for the dressing-room slackened, and in a quiet, inoffensive way there was much craning of necks to see what was up.

"Walter! I say, Walter!" as he came up breathlessly to Stearns, his shirt outside of his white dress waistcoat and his face flushed. Then in another burst of excitement he threw his arms around him, getting his black coat all grease paint.

"You're all grease paint," said Stearns, rather severely and a little melodramatically—he knew that from dressing-rooms and staircases he was being watched.

"I don't care," said Lehman, excitedly, "you've lost on my horse, and I put you on. Now, see here," and Stearns, by this time, had condescendingly allowed him to put his arm in his and stroll toward the dressing-room. "Now, see here, Amazon is a good horse. I've not been deceived in her. Now, Walter, I want to make you a present of that horse. You can have her," and the rest of the conversation was lost as the door of the dressing-room closed behind the two.

If Stearns had known that all the important members of the company had heard the offer he never would have accepted that horse. But the door was closed when he realized that a race-horse had been offered him, and he knew that if the offer had not been heard, the story would never gain credence. And Stearns accepted the race-horse.

Amazon was entered for Saturday's race, and the matinée was very ragged in consequence. Twice Stearns went up in his lines and once when the leading lady said prettily to him, what was always his most effective scene:

"What are you thinking about, Mr. Burke?" he answered:

"I'm thinking of Amaz—I'm thinking if love could make a woman, etc."

Amazon came in fifth at the end of the third act, which was a very fortunate thing for the third act. Lehman gave Stearns a consolation dinner and after the night performance they went out to supper with some of the millionaire's friends. Walter made some rash promises and took a lot

of kindly advice, and agreed to take Amazon out of New Orleans. It was admitted by all that the horse was "Jonahed" in the town, and that she would make her own owner's future on a Northern race track.

Sunday, at half-past nine, Stearns was awakened by the M. Antoine himself, who exclaimed excitedly, as he opened the door:

"M'sieu' Stearns, M'sieu' Stearns, you miss you train if you don't get up, and there is a horse downstairs for you."

"A horse?" said Walter, drowsily.

"Yes—a gentleman bring you a horse. He is waiting downstairs for you. It is a race-horse."

"Let him come up."

"You mean the gentleman? He says he cannot, he must hold the horse until he gives to you. He is from M'sieu' Lehman."

With a more explosive "Gee!" than he uttered for many a day, Walter was out of bed and dressing. He finished quickly

and rushed downstairs, and there was Amazon sure enough.

"Mr. Stearns, sir?" said the stable boy, who was holding the horse.

Walter nodded in a semi-dazed fashion while the boy went on:

"This is Amazon, sir, that Mr. Lehman said he'd give you. He's sorry he couldn't send him to you earlier, but he just got home, sir. Would you mind signing a receipt, sir?"

And the boy handed him a pencil and a crumpled piece of paper on which was written:

"Received one live race-horse," written in a hand that suggested an inward bath of rebellious liquors.

"One live race-horse," muttered Stearns. Then he looked at the boy whose face suggested neither humor nor sympathy.

"I wish it was a dead one."

He wrote his name at the bottom of the receipt, not that he meant to take the thing. Oh, no, but just to get time to think and, still "getting time to think," he handed the boy the receipt, and as his

thought began to grope itself into words he heard a "thank you" and the boy was gone.

Stearns looked at Amazon and Amazon looked at Stearns. Neither said a word.

"M'sieu' Stearns, M'sieu' Stearns," it was Antoine emerging from behind a corner, "I cannot find you a carriage, and the Bourbon Stree' trolley is stopped running. Yo' train it goes in half-hour. Oh, this is ver' bad."

"A half-hour!" exclaimed Walter. "Are you sure?"

"*Mais oui!*"

"Great heavens, I can't miss that train."

"The horse he's given, why not ride the horse? Your trunk is gone, and your bag you take with you. The Pacific Railroad ferry is a mile."

Walter's head was swimming. On the horse was nothing but a blanket, and though he had not signed any receipt for it he presumed it went with the gift. There was nothing else to do, and in another minute he was galloping over the

rough cobblestones. As he neared the ferry the members of the company gathered there gave him a cheer, for he was within a few seconds of missing the boat.

"What are you going to do with that horse?" asked Daniels, the manager, as the ferryboat neared the railroad dock.

"Why?" and Walter's face blanched. He thought of the friends who had witnessed the gift and who had heard him promise to take it out of New Orleans. "Can't we take it with us?"

"Take it with us?"

"Yes."

"Why, there's no horse car," gasped Daniels.

"How about the baggage-car?" suggested Stearns wildly.

"That's so," spoke up Fettler, with a grin, "there is a partition in the baggage car, and we might put him there." We were already in dock.

"Well," began Daniels, but the conductor shouted, "All aboard," and be-

fore either realized, it, Fettler was running down toward the baggage-car with Amazon. Stearns stood rooted to the ground, Daniels beside him. They saw Fettler run the horse up on a board, over drops and properties, and then the cars began to move. Nobody talked anything but Amazon that day and the next.

Before the curtain went up Monday night Daniels informed Walter that he wouldn't carry that horse again in his baggage car as long as he had any say. Amazon had kicked holes in two sets of paper armor. Walter looked somewhat surprised and then turned pale. But he walked away without saying anything.

He played all through at a tremendous nervous tension, and really he gave a great performance. But as soon as it was over he rushed to his room and sent out for a high ball. We left the next morning at 7 : 40 for Houston. When we gathered at the station there was no Stearns.

"Where's Stearns? Has anybody

seen Stearns?" Nobody had seen him since midnight.

"Let him go to blazes," said Daniels, and then, in a milder tone, explaining his unconcern at leaving Stearns behind, "there's a train at three o'clock, he can come over on that."

Again there was no talk but of Stearns and Amazon. Fettler, who had taken the horse to the stable, looked worried. Having been the means of getting the horse out of New Orleans, he felt a proprietary interest in him. He stood on the rear end of the car, watching the disappearing town, hoping, perhaps, to see the actor and his steed appear. But the train was soon tearing across the bay, and the mischief-doing property man came into the car looking downcast. He went into the smoking-car, but soon came back, with a white face.

"There's no three-forty train," he cried. Every man of the company was on his feet in an instant, while the women looked fit for smelling salts.

"No three-forty train!" was the chorus.

"The conductor says it's been cut off this week."

Daniels bounded out of his seat and rushed into the next car to see the conductor. He was back again before the company had recovered from its dismay.

"It's true, it's true, it's true," he raved. With him it was not dismay so much as anger.

A manager is never dismayed as long as he has the head-liner, the star. "People come to see the star, not the play," said Daniels once. And it is true. No matter how disconnected a play may appear by reason of one or two apparently necessary parts being cut out, people go away seemingly satisfied if the head-liner is sufficiently in evidence. Of course, the newspapers in these one-night stands occasionally perceive the fact that parts have been cut out and inform the public the next morning that they didn't get a real dollar and a half's worth, and then the once contented audience gets

mad. That's a disadvantage of an unbridled press in one-night stands.

Daniels had a whispered conversation with the star.

The company sat very quiet, hoping to catch some hint of what was coming. It isn't etiquette to ask a manager what he is going to do in a case of this kind, and even if it was etiquette the general tone of managers is "mind your own business."

Pretty soon Daniels got up and taking the manuscript out of his bag, said to Lee:

"Study up Stearns' part. You'll have to play it to-night if he don't show up."

Lee, of course, was tickled to death. He hoped Stearns would never show up. Lee got forty a week, and Stearns a hun- and twenty-five, and every time an actor who gets a hundred and twenty-five dies, your forty dollars sees visions.

The intense silence that had come over the company after Fettler's startling announcement gave way now to an excited conversational buzz.

"It's a shame to leave him there." said Hallam, who was fat and good-natured and sympathized with everybody.

"And he may not find out that that three-forty train is cut out—it's on the time-table I had," said Smith.

Fettler had been standing in a brown study. The last remark settled him. He walked up to Daniels.

"Don't you think I'd better telegraph Stearns that the three-forty's cut out? He may find another way then," he said.

"I don't care if he doesn't," snarled Daniels. Then more gently, though without relaxing his frown, "Send him a telegram, though, and sign my name to it."

The telegram went off at the first station. Daniels's name was signed to it, but it was worded differently than he expected :

"WALTER STEARNS,
Washington Hotel, Galveston.
No more trains to-night. Come to Houston on Amazon.
ARTHUR DANIELS, Manager."

When we got into Houston there was a telegram awaiting Daniels at the station :

"Have started. Will arrive in time.
"WALTER STEARNS."

"Why the deuce," shouted Daniels, "didn't he say how he was coming and when he'd get here. Here, Fettler—where's Fettler?"

Fettler had disappeared as soon as he learned how vague Stearns' message was.

"Porter," said Daniels, turning to the stage carpenter, "find out if there are any freight trains, or specials, or anything."

Porter came back with the information that there were no freight trains, or specials, or anything that would get in before half-past nine, too late for Stearns to appear.

"That man must have gone mad—perhaps he's walking. Go ahead with the part," he said to Lee, who had stood glumly by and now once more looked radiant.

It was just four o'clock when a dusty, dirty, footsore actor led a horse up the main street and stopped in front of the

National Hotel. Fettler was waiting for him and received him with open arms. Within the last twenty-four hours Stearns had come to appreciate the property man and look on him as his only friend, and though he was leading juvenile and had all the proud and aristocratic insolence of that haughty class, yet he threw his arms around his twenty-five dollars-a-week friend and almost wept. It was the first time that Fettler had seen Stearns act this way. Stearns was of the new school which prides itself as being as little like actors as possible off the stage (and succeeds generally both on and off). In private life, in accordance with the rules of the school, he expressed affection by a studied indifference toward the object of his love. So when he threw his arms about Fettler's neck just the way the old-style actors used to do, and do now when sufficiently enthused, he affected the property man deeply. Fettler was of the old school; he loved its mannerisms, its long locks, its fur coats, the actors who acted on the stage and off. He had some

doubts as to Walter's histrionic ability heretofore; he felt now that the true nature of the man was revealed.

"Cheer up, old man," he said, slapping the dusty traveler on the back, "I've got a room for you, and I've ordered a high ball sent up. Go up and go to bed. I'll have them wake you in time." And he led Stearns off; but not the high-spirited Stearns who had hobnobbed with horse-owners in New Orleans.

"You see, I couldn't ride him all the way," explained Stearns as Fettler helped him get ready for a bath. "I couldn't let him run, for I knew he wouldn't last. So I'd ride on him a mile, then I'd get off and lead him a mile." And he went over each mile in detail in a weak, plaintive voice, hardly the voice that the matinée girls of New York knew and loved—and Fettler listened and consoled.

"And it's sixty miles, you know, Joe," said Stearns, as he was tucked in bed and Fettler was preparing to leave, "from Galveston to Houston."

"Twice the distance from Schenectady

to Troy," thought Joe, but he did not say it, for he felt serious. The two men had sworn eternal friendship and never to part with Amazon.

Stearns donned his eighteenth century costume that night with less alacrity than usual.

"You're played out, old man. You've had a hard day," the members of the company said when they came to his dressing-room to congratulate him upon his arrival.

"I feel all right after the rest—sixty miles isn't much." And it was true he did feel all right, but there was a change in his nature of which he was not yet aware.

"Well, you got here, didn't you?" snarled Daniels when he came around before the curtain went up, to see if everything was going all right.

"No, I'm still in Galveston," but the spirit that would have made the flippant answer the final word was not there.

"How'd you come?" snapped the manager.

"Why," and Stearns looked at him in amazement, "on Amazon, of course."

"What!"—it was fairly a yell—"you don't mean you've got that brute with you still."

"Why, yes."

"What are you going to do with him now?"

"Take him with me." It was said quietly, but with a great deal of determination.

"Not if I know it," and Daniels walked away with an oath.

The next stand was San Antonio, and we were to leave immediately after the performance in a special train. Fettler went about his work during the play very quietly, and instead of the usual pugnacious attitude he showed that gentle calm that is characteristic of great minds when they are undergoing a trial. Daniels was too busy to make inquiry, and it wasn't until we were all on board and the train moving that some one suggested:

"Where's Amazon?"

Both Fettler and Stearns were very grave.

After three or four minutes of persistent questioning the interesting information was elicited that they had sent him ahead at their own expense to Ft. Morth, where we were to appear on Thursday. Both kept to themselves and would not discuss the matter then or all the next day in San Antonio.

After the performance Wednesday night I saw Daniels and the star in whispered conversation, and caught the words "Stearns," "giving way," "bad performance—not like a juvenile," and "that damned horse." There was no getting away from it, either. Stearns was not playing as he did before we left New Orleans; his light comedy manner had given way to something that resembled the method of the second old man.

We did not leave San Antonio until very nearly ten o'clock in the morning. A theatrical company never thinks about any one subject long, so that when we gathered at the depot Fettler and Stearns

and Amazon were not discussed, or, if they were, it was but briefly and "en passang," as we said on the road. Three days of Amazon and the subject was old and uninteresting. The change in Stearns' acting and his personality, which might have been still considered a matter of interest, had been settled with that remarkable charity that actors have toward one another. He was practically, unanimously declared unsuited to the rôle of Burke, and it was whispered that if he lasted "into New York," which was doubtful, he would be dropped there, "with good reason, too," as Lee observed.

Miss Barwell, the leading lady, was alone in the belief that the change in Stearns was only temporary; she alone watched the actor and Fettler as they walked up and down the platform, and hoped that they would not get into any new trouble; she alone, with a sweet womanly sympathy, listened to Stearns with a serious face when he talked of his troubles and said "Gee!"

It's a four-hour ride from San Antonio

to Ft. Morth, and a hot, uncomfortable ride it was that February morning. As we neared the town, both property man and leading juvenile became noticeably jubilant and excited, slapped one another frequently on the back and conducted an animated conversation, the only part of which that reached us being the terrible word Amazon.

As we drew into the depot I noticed a large crowd, which was not such an unusual sight in these southern towns, where the arrival and departure of a through train is a social event. As we got off the train the people crowded about, and there was a general murmur, half angry half conversational, such as would delight the heart of any stage manager that has wrestled with untrained supers for "Julius Cæsar." While, of course, we all admired the effect, we distrusted the setting and my heart sank when a great, tall, somber fellow pushed his way forward and said :

"Which is Walter Stearns?"

Stearns at that moment was descending

from the coach, and he was almost face to face with the questioner. He turned very pale, and even if his first impulse was to say that he was not Stearns, he had forgotten it in a second.

"I'm Stearns," he said. "What's the matter?"

"You're wanted," said the burly fellow, putting one hand on his shoulder.

"Wanted?" Stearns' voice was thick.

"Yes—for horse stealing."

"Horse stealing? Great guns!"

Daniels by this time had pushed his way up to the two.

"What's the matter? What's the matter here? I'm Mr. Daniels. I'm the manager—what is all this trouble about?" he exclaimed in his very authoritative way. "I'm the manager for——"

"You don't say!" the burly-looking policeman, or sheriff, or whatever he was. looked down on him with fine contempt. "So you're the manager, hey? Well, perhaps I'd better arrest you too."

Daniels shrank perceptibly. This was evidently no professional deadhead to be

scorned into subjection. This absolutely unprofessional lack of fear of a manager took his breath away.

"But tell me," more meekly, "tell me why you want to arrest Mr. Stearns?"

"There's no wanting about it. He's arrested long ago. If you want to know any more about it, why come along," and he moved off alongside of Stearns, who looked as though he were willing to go anywhere no matter how far or how hot it was, if it took him away from this gaping and not particularly friendly crowd.

Of course we all went along, too. Fettler seemed inclined to join the procession, but Daniels spotted him before he had taken many steps and quietly ordered him to go and look after his props.

"Maybe I'll be of some use," he began, with a plaintive note in his voice.

"Use?" snarled Daniels. "Use! Precious little use you'll ever be except to get this company into trouble, and if

it hadn't been for you this never would have happened."

It was a short walk up to the jail, but it seemed long, as Stearns remarked, longer even than the distance from Galveston to Houston. Stearns' almost stupid, downcast manner had more effect on the arresting officer than Daniels' excited chatter, and before we got to the court-room we knew something about the charge that confronted "us"—for we felt that we were all in it. The police officer or deputy sheriff was far kinder in his attitude toward Stearns than was the crowd. A trouper to them wasn't to be sympathized with as an ordinary man, and then again he was to them a horse thief. I must admit that Walter looked guilty.

The crowd followed us into the court-house. We waited anxiously while the judge mounted his seat, put on his eye-glasses and looked at us very seriously and then called :

"Bring the prisoner."

"That's me," said Stearns, with a faint smile, and for a moment he really seemed

as buoyant as a leading juvenile should be. But it was only a momentary reaction.

Walter, under questioning, was about to begin to tell how he came to have the horse when the employer of the "cowman"—say "cowboy" in Texas and you'll find six inch armor a poor protection—who had sworn out the warrant came in and begged leave to interrupt the proceedings. It was not his horse at all. Ramsay was drunk when he swore out the warrant; he was very sorry if he had inconvenienced anybody, and he hoped the whole party would come out and have one with him.

The judge listened quietly to this, and then, with some languor, as though it was not an unusual proceeding, called out:

"Discharged!"

Daniels was dancing about. "This is an outrage—an outrage!"

"If you don't keep quiet, young feller," called the judge, as he started to leave his elevated seat, "I'll fine you for contempt."

There was no getting away from the

ranch owner, and Stearns and several of the company went off to have one with him. Stearns needed it.

Daniels went to the theater to look after some details, and when he got back to the hotel, Stearns and the star were in earnest conversation.

"I'm going to sell Amazon, Mr. Daniels," he explained, "and as soon as you can conveniently replace me, I'll resign."

"Sell Amazon!" yelled Daniels, as though a personal affront had been offered, "not by a great sight. The house has sold out in the last half hour, and if Amazon does not appear they won't let us out of the town. The manager of the theater says he wouldn't dare deliver us our share of the receipts if we don't make good."

"Make good?" murmured the star.

"Yes, make good. The people have an idea that this is a horse play, and they're coming in large bunches."

"What are you going to do?" asked Walter, in his lately acquired listless way.

"Why, you'll have to come on in the second act on Amazon."

"But the second act is an interior."

"So much the better. Say he's run away with you. You can fix up a few lines easily. I've telegraphed Seven-Days-Ahead (the advance man) to arrange hereafter to get us a baggage-car with a partition in it, so that we can carry Amazon with us."

That night Stearns got the ovation of his life. He was cheered every time he came on, and when he made his appearance on horseback in an eighteenth century drawing-room, the house went wild. But he took it all so quietly that Fettler wept. During the next three weeks we played to standing room only; but never could Walter be roused to more than a faint appreciation of the fact that he was being lionized. He spoke his lines listlessly, and it was in sheer desperation that the author of the play was sent for.

He sat through one performance and then said, "I'll fix that all right." And he did.

He took all Walter's love speeches and light comedy scenes, and gave them to the first old man, and the chief, who had not had lines like these in years, played them with a dash and a vim that made us all wonder. Walter got the chief's advisory and admonitory speeches—he took them, too, listlessly as he was doing everything —and he spoke them, to our further amazement, better than the other who had nearly seventy years to his credit.

"It's a wonderful case of stage psychology," said Hallan the other day, when contracts were being signed for the coming season, and Stearns was scrawling his signature, "Walter Stearns and Horse to play first old man's part."

And we all looked at Hallan and nodded wisely as though we knew what he meant by stage psychology.

An Eloping Party

An Eloping Party

From Mr. Jefferson Morris
to Mr. Maurice Apgar, Chicago.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Nov.* 10, 1900.

DEAR MAURY:

Glad to hear you don't mind the Chicago atmosphere. Always suspected you had a weakness for the commonplace. Seriously, it's not so bad when you're in it—it's going to it that palls.

Things about the same here. Throckburn was black-balled the other night. Mighty glad of it, *Entre nous*, I helped. The Lord knows I try not to forget my own "suping" days, and the trials and tribulations of playing one-night stands for twenty weeks—but at least I never went about acting on the streets hoping

that somebody would see the likeness between me and my " 3-sheets."

Was given a rather nice dinner the other night by Mrs. Cannon. Usual style. —good things to eat; but, Lord, such poor things to talk to! Latest things from the market; also from the girls' schools. Heavens! such *ingenués*.

Went to a queer place last Saturday night—taken there as escort by little Miss Tristy, the passion novelist. Sort of a restricted boarding house with Saturday evenings. Horrible crowd. One fellow's *cuff* slipped off when he was eating. One redeeming feature was a stunning Kentucky woman more beautiful than Venice and just as alluring. Husband was with her—a regular ogre. Watched her like a lynx and followed us out when I tried to get a chat with her on the stairs. Funny, isn't it? He's a drummer of some sort, rather cheap—but she belongs. Do you know her? Mrs. Fairhaven is the name. She does not seem to know anybody, and if the hub wouldn't crowd would be lively.

Yours,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven, New York.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Nov.* 11, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. FAIRHAVEN:

I send you herewith the book we were talking of the other night. It is one of the few novels published in the year that is réally worth reading.

Very sincerely,
JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Fairhaven to
Mrs. Jefferson Morris.

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 12, 1900.

MY DEAR MR. MORRIS:

I thank you very much for sending the book. It was very kind of you to remember me. Mr. Fairhaven and I shall be glad to see you any evening you may care to call.

Sincerely,
EDITH FAIRHAVEN.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mr. Maurice Apgar.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Nov.* 18, 1900.

DEAR MAURY:

Sent the flowers as you directed. Write me details about it, won't you? Sorry to hear your route is fixed so that you will not get to New York this season. On the other hand, from what I see in the papers, you are lucky, for the critics are knocking the life out of the fencing plays.

I note your query about the Fairhaven. Fair as ever, but no haven—*pour moi.* Sent book to her, hoping, etc. Got note asking me to call on her and *Mr. Fairhaven!* Just as if. . . . If you had ever seen the brute you would appreciate how clever the lady is with the gloves.

Yours,
JEFFERSON MORRIS.

P. S.—Met the Blessed Damozel this p. m. Oh! Maury! If you could only see her! She is the best looking woman in New York. Seems so affectionate, but cold as ice to me. Asked me to call again

and see Mr. Fairhaven!! She lives in continual dread of him, I can see that. As I said, she's the best looking, etc., and such fine "feminine quality"—Mme. Bovary.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 22.

MY DEAR MRS. FAIRHAVEN:

An entertainment will be given next week for the benefit of an old actor obliged to leave the stage. Would it be too much to ask you to lend us your name as a patroness?

Very sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Fairhaven to
Mrs. Jefferson Morris.

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 23, 1900.

MY DEAR MR. MORRIS:

I shall be very glad to do anything I can for the entertainment, and if you will send the tickets I will send you a check for those that I can use.

Sincerely,

EDITH FAIRHAVEN.

Part of a letter to
Miss Hastings, sister
of Mrs. Fairhaven,
living in Toledo, O.

NEW YORK, *Nov.* 24, 1900.

.

Just think! I am to be one of the patronesses for the John Alborn benefit at the Waldorf Astoria. It came about through a man we met at the horrible Dagmans'. I told you about those people —relatives of a particular friend of James —very coarse and vulgar. This man was as much out of place as I felt I was. I did not catch his name at first, and we got to laughing and joking. It almost took my breath away when I learned that he was Jefferson Morris, the actor.

He was so different from actor people. You remember the one we met in Indianapolis who insisted on reciting Shakespeare all evening. Mr. Morris is not a bit like that. James took a dislike to him from the first, and was disgustingly rude.

Oh! Gertie, if you only knew how lonely I sometimes feel and how I long

for the dear old days in Toledo. They weren't exciting, were they, sis? But they were peaceful and happy, and there was nothing that was not refined. There was no bullying then, or lonesomeness.

Sometimes when James goes out in the evening and leaves me all alone in the apartment for three, four and five hours, I do nothing but cry, and if it weren't for the thought of dear old dad and mother, I'd commit suicide or run away or do something desperate.

Your loving sister,

EDITH.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Nov.* 30, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. FAIRHAVEN:

I have just learned that the committee did not, through some oversight, send you any tickets. They probably thought, that, as I had suggested your name, I would look out for them, which I did not understand, and therefore apologize.

It seems to be too late to mend the

matter, as all the tickets are disposed of. I held two for myself and send them to you. May I go with you? I hope you will not think I am presumptuous.

Sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mrs. Fairhaven to
Mr. Jefferson Morris.

MY DEAR MR. MORRIS:

It was very kind of you to send me the tickets, I can hardly avail myself of such a sacrifice as you prefer to make, and return you one. I hope to see you at the benefit. Sincerely,

EDITH FAIRHAVEN.

Mrs. Fairhaven to Miss Hastings, of Toledo.

NEW YORK, *Dec.* 4, 1900.

. You don't know how cheering your letter was. You have more strength of character than I, and would lead where I follow. Sometimes I think —it seems a dreadful thing to say—you don't hate James any more than I do.

You don't know with what fear and trembling I went to the benefit. Mr.

Morris offered to take me, but I did not dare to accept this invitation, as you know how James would rave if he thought I talked with any but the limited business crowd that he introduces to me.

I met Mr. Morris, there, though, and he was very kind and made it very agreeable for me. There was a great crowd of people and I met several very interesting men and women—the kind you and I used to think New York contained to overflowing, and yet the kind I have not met before in all my seven years living in the great metropolis. As you know, James' friends are neither literary, artistic, nor fashionable. Oh! Moi!

Tried Altmans for the —— etc.

Lovingly,

EDITH.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Dec.* 6, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. FAIRHAVEN:

Nordica sings Tuesday afternoon at Carnegie—the Liebestod, too! In light

of the offering, may I be allowed to bow down at the shrine?

Very sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mrs. Fairhaven to Mr. Jefferson Morris.

NEW YORK, *Dec.* 6, 1900.

MY DEAR MORRIS:

It was very kind of you to think of me, and I shall very gladly go. I will be ready at 2:50, as I see the concert is announced for 3 P.M.

Very sincerely,

EDITH FAIRHAVEN.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Dec.* 10, 1900.

MY DEAR MRS. FAIRHAVEN:

The Marcius Simmons things I was telling you about will be at Avery's only till the last of the week. Can we go to-morrow?

Very sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,

NEW YORK, *Dec.* 12, 1900.

MON AMIE:

I saw Partinan to-day, and he said he could easily fix the bracelet. It will be finished to-morrow. May I bring it at three?

Very sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,

NEW YORK, *Dec.* 16, 1900.

MON AMIE:

I understand that "The Cretans" is really worth seeing. A professional matinee is given to-morrow. I await eagerly.

Sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mrs. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Dec.* 21, 1900.

MON AMIE :

The new Whistler at Wunderlich's is really superb. Quite in the style of the "Miss Alexander." I haven't seen you in three days. Can't we go to-morrow?

Always,
JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

WASHINGTON, D.C., *Jan.* 4, 1900.

MON AMIE :

I hope you will not think I am exaggerating. If ever before in my life I was thankful that my position keeps me in New York pretty nearly all season, I am now. We were to play Baltimore next week, but on account of the failure of the Second Mr. Blueberry, we go back to fill out the season at the Hyperion.

I do not believe I could have lived it through had I been obliged to stay away from you, and now at the thought that

within a week I shall be back in New York I am almost delirious with joy.

I will be in New York Sunday, and I presume I shall not see you until Monday. You do not know how I long to talk to you. How vacant it all seems where you are not! Can't we have lunch together Monday? I know, I know—— yet still I ask. Please, *mon amie*, please.

Always,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Maurice Apgar to
Mr. Jefferson Morris.

CHICAGO, *Feb.* 10, 1900.

DEAR JEFF:

Showed the little pen-and-ink sketch you sent to me to several of the critics, hoping they would say something. You have to cultivate the alleged art and dramatic critics here. Imagine trying to "cultivate" R. S. of the *Evening Pillow*. I cultivated the fellow with the *Star* to $1.85 worth of drinks and cigars. In this morning's paper there is just four lines. Am going down this afternoon to see the

editor and get back $1.25. The difference is all the notice is worth.

I do not understand why you persistently avoid answering my queries about the Fairhaven. Is it that she no longer interests, or that the affair has reached the stage where inquiries are dangerous? It was not fair to work up my curiosity and then drop the matter like you have. Now own up.

Sincerely,

MAURICE APGAR.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mr. Maurice Apgar.

THE PLAYERS,
NEW YORK, *Feb*, 12, 1901.

MY DEAR MAURY:

Thanks for the papers. The fellow on the Gazette seems to know what he is talking about. The other is an ass. . . .

I take up the subject you suggest with a great deal of reluctance. You and I have always been the best of friends, but there comes a time when a man doubts the understanding of even his best friend. You cannot imagine how much I have regretted

a certain easy tone with which I referred to Mrs. Fairhaven in my letters to you several months ago. I can't remember exactly what I said, but I do remember that my point of view was the right.

Mrs. Fairhaven is a woman whom I love and respect more than any woman I have ever met. It isn't an easy thing for a man to say that of a young married woman and not feel that he is in a way injuring her. We have been together a great deal this winter, and I have learned to know a good woman when I see one (which is a great deal, if you get right down to facts and acknowledge things).

I have learned how beautiful is the strength of a good woman, and how contemptible we men are sometimes in the things we think, but don't say. I tell you frankly that I love her and that I believe she loves me; and I also tell you (I'm hitting right out from the shoulder, old man, and I hope you won't mind) that I would not let my best friend, my own brother or father, no matter what they thought they knew of my character and

experience, think of her or refer to her in any other than the way I do.

Sincerely,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS,

NEW YORK, *March* 8, 1901.

CARISSIMA:

It is so beautiful, this sudden breaking in of spring. Can't we go away—I thought of having lunch at that queer little Brauhaus on Staten Island.

Always,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mrs. Fairhaven to
Miss Hastings, Toledo.

NEW YORK, *April* 13, 1901.

MY DEAR GERTIE:

How can I write you all that I wish to tell you? You say that my letters have been more cheerful of late, and that you are glad. This one, I fear, will break your

heart. Have I been cheerful of late? Yes, cheerful one moment, happy as a human being could be, and then the next moment suffering the tortures of the lost.

There is not much to tell. I wrote you three months ago of my meeting Jefferson Morris, he actor.

After the entertainment I saw him—too often, alas. He was so kind, so gentle. There was never a word that was wrong. It was laughter, whole-souled, innocent laughter, and laughter is so good. By and by he spoke of love, but it was with so much fear that he offend that I could not chide him. At first I thought he was merely flirting. Oh, Gertie, if you only knew, and though you think you do, dear, you do not one ten-thousandth part, the hell my life has been these seven years with James. A kind word has been an oasis in a desert.

To-day I told Jefferson I would see him no more—that it must not be—it was all so wrong. I came home wishing that I were dead. I cried and prayed all afternoon—yes, Gertie, prayed to God to make

me strong against temptation. Oh, Gertie, if James had only helped me just a little, a very little! When he came in I went up and kissed him and he brushed me aside saying: "What the devil was that for?"

I wanted him to talk to me, and even had he talked a little roughly I would not have minded it. I might have won him into good humor, for I was prepared to do anything. But no, he was morose and sullen, and when I burst out crying, he swore and went out.

Then I wrote to Jefferson. Oh, Gertie, it is wrong, wrong, I know, but it is true. I wrote him that I loved him; that I loved him with all my soul. You know I never loved James, and that if I had not been foolish and proud I never would have married him; but I have tried to make up for that during these seven long, awful years. You know in what a prison he has kept me; you know that I have suffered without complaint. And now my heart has broken from its cage—it is no longer mine.

Write to me kindly, sister, and do not think harshly of Jefferson, for I love him, love him, and my heart is breaking.

EDITH.

Mr. Jefferson Morris to
Mrs. Fairhaven.

THE PLAYERS, *April* 13, 1901.

MA MIE:

After I left you this afternoon I regretted most bitterly what I had said, but I cannot take it back. I cannot, though my life were at stake. I love you, Edith, love you, and now here alone, when I recognize how deep and broad is the gulf that divides us, it seems to me that all light and reason has gone out of life.

But you were right to-day, *ma mie*. It was wrong for me to tell you so, and it would have been wrong for you to listen. But you had told me of the bitterness of your life, and I had told you of the thoughtlessness and folly of mine. You said that in my friendship you found "consolation and strength" — could I avoid telling you that in yours I had found the only womanly influence that ever affected me?

You are right—I cannot but feel it. I would not be true to you did I not say it; and yet what you have done has brought me to the pass where it almost seems that all the strength I am capable of supporting would not prevent my breaking down.

I have thought that I knew what it was to suffer, but I never dreamed that I would be as weak and weary of life as I now am.

Always,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mrs. Fairhaven to
Miss Hastings, Toledo.

NEW YORK, *April* 14, 1801.

MY OWN DEAR SISTER:

By the time you get this note it will be all over. Think kindly of me and forgive me if you can. Tell dear old dad as much as you care, and give mother my last letter to read. Tell them I am not all bad—only broken-hearted.

EDITH.

Telegram from Miss Hastings to Mrs. Fairhaven.

Edith, sister, dad and mother pray you to come home and live always with them. Dear sister, no one loves you more than we do.

GERTRUDE.

ON BOARD THE "ETRURIA,"
April 18, 1901.

MY DEAR OLD MAURY :

I suppose you wonder what this means, but I simply had to rush things off and clear out. We closed April 6. I couldn't stand it any longer. Will you believe I have paced this deck for two days never speaking a word to any one, eating practically nothing, but drinking, drinking—just drinking God, if I could only get something that would make me drunk! *Mal de mer!* the ship might stand on end and I would not feel it. My mind's on fire, and my heart is lead.

Heart, I hear you say. Since when? "Plenty of heart for all affairs of charity but little of it for affairs of love." You

recall that? And then, marriage—"Oh! yes, marriage, some day, when this sort of game is out, with a nice little girl—any nice little girl will do—she trusting and loving and you keeping her safe, etc."

You remember all that kind of stuff? You can't feel as I feel now how disgusting it all is. Yes, disgusting,—far more than those we used to ridicule, who, with a fifty cent passion and a thirst for domesticity, took matrimony at the breakfast of life.

I have lived, Maury, the last three months as I feel I shall never live again—too intensely, too turbulently. What is that Flaubert said about living calmly to put passion in your art—something like that. I feel as though I would never want to work again. I have lived.

I began, I admit, with "little heart." We decided last Wednesday a week ago to "go." She had sent me away and then sent for me. We loved each other above everything—she above reputation, and I above—. She gave up everything, and I? What was I to give up?

You know how a man looks at those

things. He doesn't lose; he gains. But a woman—that's the rough part of it.

At the last moment she wrote to her sister and then I went up to New Haven to await her arrival. She had written her sister, thinking she would be gone before the letter was received. They telephoned from Toledo to New York to find out if she had really left, and then sent a telegram. The ogre had been particularly nasty that morning, or she never would have come.

I met her at the depot at New Haven. She was ghastly white and too weak to talk. I put her into a carriage and she handed me the telegram. Then she fainted, coming to by the time we arrived at the hotel.

I told her that I loved her more than my own happiness. She threw her arms around my neck and kissed me passionately.

"I love you, Jefferson, more than all the world" she cried.

"And you trust me?"

"More than that, I love you."

"Do with me as you will" she sobbed, clinging to me.

The decision of that moment, were I ever called upon to make it again, would be the same.

I put her gently from me.

"Be ready in an hour to return to your old home in Toledo" I said.

And then I left her.

How it all comes back to me. The softness of her hair, the fire of her cheek, and her words. It seems more than I can bear.

I know that you will for the moment doubt the rest. I wired to her folks and an hour later put her on her train, bound home. I rode with her for several hours, and then left her never to see her again, unless she send for me. We talked it over and that was our decision.

There are moments when I have great strength; moments when I have great weakness; but I will live by that decision, God helping me, though the call never come.

Faithfully,

JEFFERSON MORRIS.

Mr. Maurice Apgar to
J. Tatler Brown, of
New York.

CHICAGO, ILL., *May* 2, 1901.

DEAR TAT:

Your interesting news about the fizzling out of Jeff's eloping party and his sailing was supplemented to-day by a letter from the ex-eloper himself. A queer letter, I must say. Always thought Jeff was hard as nails, but his letter reads as though he had 'em. Makes an awful stew over the failure of the affair and tells a queer story about funny doings at a hotel in New Haven. May be true, but I doubt it. Doesn't sound like Jeff. I always said he had a queer streak in him, and it may be that it has got the best of him and is leading him a comet dance. The "Platonic" business is all right in its way—had a summer of it once myself—but it seems as though Jeff piled it on.

Will return Friday. Prepare for a glorious "go" on the downward path.

Yours,

MAURICE APGAR.

Miss Gertrude Hastings to
Mrs. Leroy, Cleveland, O.

TOLEDO, *April* 19, 1901.

DEAR COUSIN:

Just a line. Knew you would be anxious to hear that Edith is much better to-day. It is like a new light in the home to have her with us, and she is happy, too, I know. She will never be the same Edith, but she cannot avoid growing more like her old self every day now that she is here with dad and mother and me.

James Fairhaven telegraphed that if Emily didn't return he would come for her. Dad wired him that if he ever dared to appear in Toledo he'd—you know what dad is when he is mad.

With love,

GERTIE.

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